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Ontological Experiences from a University's Change Management of its Online Learning Initiative and Associated Continuing Professional Development Opportunities for Academic Staff

by
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Signed: *Date:* 20th. April 2011

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Please Note

Those persons interviewed as well as closely associated individuals have been given pseudonyms while the name of the University researched, its support units and the title of its publications have been disguised.

ABSTRACT

University leaders are continually being asked to improve learning and teaching within their institutions to meet certain national standards, and to deliver across the board measurable outcomes. Although technology enhanced learning has been advocated as one way of meeting student needs more effectively and efficiently, a challenge for university senior management is how best to facilitate this development, empowering staff and encouraging participation, aligning individual motivations and concerns with organisational goals. In particular, this should include the development of engaging policies and practices in relation to the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of the academic staff (Taylor, 2003; Maguire, 2005).

Change management is accordingly a complex, social phenomenon and this qualitative study seeks to isolate the above aspects in a way that gives voice to and uncovers the socially constructed, ontological understandings and interpretations of those involved. It investigates one UK university in relation to its online learning initiative to determine what essential themes could be identified from lived experiences. Data was collected from conversational interviews with a purposeful sample of senior university managers, academic managers, academics and academically related staff. These were subsequently analysed by way of NVivo software and a human science research framework developed by van Manen (1990), with added quality assurance offered through a 'trustworthiness' concept first posited by Lincoln and Guba (2005).

The three essential themes that emerged were gathered together in relation to experiences from planning and leadership for change, systems operations for change and preparing staff for change. The findings that were deduced from these themes were then compared to key points already revealed by research conducted elsewhere. Finally, recommendations that are intended to be of use in the University's ongoing

management of its online learning initiative and associated CPD opportunities for academic staff have been proposed.

1. CHANGING ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES AND REASONS FOR THIS RESEARCH STUDY

1.1 GROWTH AND DEMANDS WITHIN ADVANCED ECONOMIES

Until recently, organisations could count on long periods of stability followed by short bursts of change. Instead, we now live in what Barnett (2000) has described as an ‘age of super complexity’, characterised by uncertainty and ambiguity; a limited lifespan of expertise and a time bereft of ‘grand narratives’ (Lyotard, 1984). Although affected at present by a temporary economic recession, the global economy has continued and will continue to undergo profound changes over the longer term.

This has resulted in manufacturing quickly moving to wherever costs are lowest and produced industrial societies in the post-modern era that have a more unsettled, fragmented and diversified nature – with an ever increasing element of work concerned with the generation, manipulation and dissemination of knowledge.

Information and communications technologies have become key channels for the dissemination of up-to-date data; and the more such technologies allow expanded access to data, the more this data mushrooms. Intelligence from the raw ingredients of this data is doubling every seven years, computing power is doubling every eighteen months and 10,000 articles per day are being published in scientific journals (Smith, 1997). Such objects have become critical factors in "determining security, prosperity, and quality of life, the global nature of our society, [and] the ease with which information technology ….enables the rapid exchange of information, and networking…" (Duderstadt, 2000, p. 220).

In the last 60 years the United Kingdom economy has been no exception to this trend that has seen a shift from manufacturing to knowledge and service sectors, with demands for highly skilled and constantly re-skilled personnel. Less training for specific mastery will however be required in such environments. There will instead be a greater emphasis placed on learning to acquire and apply skills of creativity, problem solving, analysis and evaluation (Fitzgerald, 1999). In 2006, the report from the UK's Institute for Employment Research (Wilson, Homenidou, & Dickerson, 2006) showed that knowledge workers alone constituted over 40% of the workforce and that this figure is projected to rise to 45% by 2014 when the combined total of knowledge workers and those employed in the service sector will reach 73%!

1.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Universities have an obvious and crucial role to play here (Singh, O'Donoghue, & Worton, 2005). Just as the early learning technologies of pen and paper radically changed learning, teaching and thinking, the advent of Internet technology is likely to lead to potential changes in education that will not be merely incremental, but transformative:

> "The great significance of the institution of the university today is that it can be the most important site of interconnectivity in what is now a knowledge society. There is a proliferation of so many different kinds of knowledge that no particular one can unify all the others. The university…can open up avenues of communication between these different kinds of knowledge…" (Delanty, 2001, p. 8).

It is in fact more appropriate to think of universities as engines of knowledge – connected with developing knowledge processes, exploiting knowledge possibilities, engaging its staff and students in such pursuits – and of subsequent wealth creation, rather than as places where knowledge just resides.

Accordingly, a vastly increased demand for university places is likely, fuelled by the view of many governments that considerable advantage will be gained in this new "knowledge economy" (Drucker, 1969) by expanding higher education [even though the merit of this conviction has been strongly challenged (Wolf, 2002)]. International activities and international students – particularly at post-graduate level – have now become an extremely important element of the UK Higher Education profile (Coates, 2006). The World Bank has furthermore forecast that around the globe the number of students will rise (from 70 million in 2001) to 160 million by 2025 (figures quoted by Latchem & Hanna, 2001a). How this growth will be addressed is a critical factor, but a means will be touched on in the following pages because, even now, a sizeable new university needs to open each week to keep up with current participation rates in Higher Education (Daniel, 1998) and of course it does not.

1.2.1 TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING

The new types of students who are being encouraged to enter universities are however "both less well prepared for higher education and less able to devote the necessary time to study because reduced financial support means that many more students have term-time employment" (D'andrea & Gosling, 2001, p. 65). They are computer literate but possess a much shorter attention span and demand much more from education in terms of accommodating this and their preferred learning styles. So, could the very technology that has fuelled the development of the knowledge economy now be deployed to assist education and training and enable much wider student access? Certainly it would seem so. The technological developments that have taken place in the last 20 years – including eLearning[1] – not only affect how knowledge is acquired and maintained but also how education is delivered (Singh,

[1] eLearning has been defined by JISC (2003) as "learning facilitated and supported through the use of information and communications technology (ICT)."

O'Donoghue & Worton, 2005). Although at the start these instances came about from incremental bottom up initiatives they have now become more institutionalised, systematic and clearly (as will be acknowledged) politically driven (Smith, 2005). The sector now has a capacity to deliver and support learning flexibly and cost-effectively anytime/anywhere; and a diverse range of instructional strategies can be employed to accommodate different learning styles within group work, project work, placements / field trips, self-paced study, workshops and seminars. Innovation is gaining acceptance as a common "good", part of a view that universities' historical concern with teaching, research and service needs to change (Smith, 2005).

1.2.2 POLITICAL PRESSURES AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY ISSUES

UK higher education has now been charged by successive governments with attracting greater numbers of students especially from more diverse socio-economic backgrounds to boost the workforce of the new economy. However, the running costs of higher education have grown at the same time as a relative decline in monies being received from government sources. An added pressure is that at the same time there have been increased demands made for greater accountability in respect of the sums that have been allocated (Dearlove, 2002). Barnett (1997, p. 32) observes that the changes under way are evident in the new vocabulary that describes higher educational curricula or intentions. Terms such as skills, transferable skills, outcomes, experiential learning, capability, enterprise and reflective learning are used within themes of academic competitiveness, work effectiveness and policies that try to define somewhat fuzzy concepts. Scott (2001) wondered whether the close association between teaching and research fundamentally therefore made universities ill-equipped to tackle business-like approaches of this nature, "the new economy of e-learning". On the other hand, Gove (2003) has suggested that universities are in fact already part of such an over-regulated environment of which teaching and learning standards (mentioned previously) are but part. Indeed, in a society geared up to achieving certain levels of performance there nowadays appears to be a mistrust of all things that cannot be easily quantified and measured. So, in order to

become less reliant on public funding, UK universities are being encouraged to be entrepreneurial and innovative in their activities.

Concurrently, universities are increasingly seen more as service providers closely linked to labour market needs and demands rather than institutions that are allowed to take a more detached view. Such a standpoint also accommodates the concept of a lifelong "learning society" as found in the report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (1997), particularly for those individuals who aiming to stay employed and to businesses that seek to adapt, survive and grow and need assistance for their staff on a flexible basis (Bates, 1999). Indeed, as the knowledge economy develops and the demand for workers with constantly updated skills and knowledge becomes increasingly pressing, universities are evermore extending their provision of postgraduate vocational education as well into courses specifically aimed at continuing professional development that are often designed and delivered in partnership with corporate clients.

1.2.3 INTEGRATION WITH NEW LEARNING SYSTEMS

The influential study by Gibbons et al. in 1994 drew a distinction between what the authors saw as Mode 1 and Mode 2 forms of knowledge production that have come more to the fore. Mode 1 is characterised as propositional or codified knowledge, whereas Mode 2 knowledge gives value to personal knowledge derived from application and problem-solving. It is inter-disciplinary and team-generated, is circuitous in that it evolves from its application in solving problems in the real world. Such forms of learning require participation in communities and depend on discussion, reflection and critique. Mode 1 has been associated with instructivist teaching where the teacher pours knowledge into the 'empty head' of the student whereas Mode 2 has been linked to learning that is socially constructed, where the teacher is a facilitator and even a fellow learner. So, while Mode 1 has been seen as 'learning that', Mode 2 is typified as 'knowing how'. While neither mode exists in a pure form, it is clear that Mode 2 approaches to learning have been gaining greater acceptance and that contemporary educational design and learning systems

incorporating eLearning (Laurillard, 2002) are more learner-focused, offering learners greater choice and flexibility. Put another way:

> "E-learning exploits interactive technologies and communication systems to improve the learning experience. It has the potential to transform the way we teach and learn across the board. It can raise standards, and widen participation in lifelong learning. It cannot replace lecturers or tutors, but alongside traditional teaching methods, it can enhance the quality and reach of their teaching. It can enable every learner to achieve his or her potential and help to build an educational workforce empowered to change. It makes possible a truly ambitious education and training system for a future learning society" (Department for Education & Skills, 2003, p. 7).

As such, eLearning is certainly a more effective instructional technique for modern learning, encouraging a higher order understanding through the practice of individual reflection, actions / inter-actions, and problem solving skills that emulate their application far beyond their university studies; and prepares the student in a more authentic manner to apply both the content and the process to the workplace and/or everyday decision-making (Newman, 1996). However, the implementation of online learning delivery systems, as part of this overall eLearning process, very much affect and threaten the long-established characteristics and culture of higher education where research is held uppermost and teaching is didactically delivered at set occasions and face-to-face within bricks-and-mortar settings. Pedagogical practices centred at the traditional intersection of time and space will no longer hold (Jarvis, 2001), and new professional skills are required with the role of the academic redefined and developed through what Fullan (1991) terms as "transformational" Continuing Professional Development (CPD) .

A very pro-active intervention by governmental and public bodies in favour of such technology assisted approaches has in fact characterised the higher education scene in recent years; and, in turn, the use of such technologies, especially amongst the post-1992 established universities such as Scotia University, has grown significantly (Browne, Jenkins, & Walker, 2006). However, although the investment in technology enhanced learning has been substantial it has not always been successful. (For instance, the UK e-University spent £50 million of public money but attracted only 900 students – and was wound up in 2003). At the same time, rising emphasis

has been placed on teaching and learning standards (Committee of Scottish University Principals, 1992; National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997; Higher Education Academy, 2006; Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2008), and the need to develop high quality student-centred resources supported by the use of new eLearning technologies. The report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (1997) in particular posited that communication and information technology would improve quality, flexibility and effectiveness, and recommended coordinated strategies and increased funding for technology in higher education to reach that end.

1.2.4 CHALLENGES FACING HIGHER EDUCATION

As Deiaco and Melin (2006) report, in the context of an international review of various institutional strategy documents, the new competitive landscape demands a greater efficiency; and it was as such both an opportunity and a threat to the well-being of universities. King (2001) though believes that even those universities and academic departments that have previously maintained a high profile with more conventional forms of open and distance modes of delivery face a larger challenge when moving into online learning with regard to assumptions previously made about teaching, design, implementation and costings, and how it weighs against their other modes of delivery and support. Indeed, Bates concludes from his study (1999) that the most difficult hurdle for conventional campus based institutions will be to "achieve an appropriate balance between face to face and technology based teaching and learning for the different kinds of students it will be serving" (p. 213).

Higher education institutions are also in turn threatened by the very features of cyberspace which mean that similar institutions at a distance or overseas, whether in the public or private for-profit domains, can nowadays so easily set up a "disruptive" presence within previously exclusive hinterlands (Christensen, Aaron, & Clark, 200; Duderstadt, 1997). Moreover, such a globalisation of higher education "will have a tendency to bring about convergence of methodologies, content, pedagogical approaches, etc. in which the most active providers will dominate" (Coimbra Group of Universities, 2002, p. 20).

All of these pressures become “inside-out” (Fullan, 2000), or external forces that impact on internal development. The worrying part is that it is not clear if universities are suitably equipped for the challenge, in terms of resources for development of quality courses on a large scale, of wrap around aspects such as marketing, delivery and customer support (Scott, 2001) and encompasses structure, actions, leadership and procedures. Amaral and Magalhães (2003) suggested that moves to carry out such a reorientation have produced a state of crisis, even of schizophrenia within Higher Educational bodies. They are finding it very difficult “to answer different and sometimes conflicting demands of many stakeholders (government, funding agencies, students, taxpayers, academics, etc.)” (p. 239); attempting to redefine their mission and objectives while keeping to something of their core values. The pressures to be more business-like, for instance, are going completely against the grain. A very recent UK survey of university professors see income generation as a matter of very small concern, even though they appreciate that their own institutions see this task as one of their top priorities (Macfarlane, 2009).

1.3 SCOTIA UNIVERSITY

1.3.1 DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY

The origins of the university can be traced back to the eighteenth when a “hospital” was funded and established by a wealthy merchant named John Watson, to offer residential education for the young sons and grandsons of Scotia City's burgesses. Progressing through various stages of status, merger and type and level of course provision it was eventually accorded the status of a university in 1992. The figures from the latest Annual Review made publicly available (Scotia University University, 2008b) recorded that it had 14,236 students with 1,101 students from EU and 2,735 (non-EU) overseas students. 1,502 staff were employed, 588 of whom were academic staff. There are total of 13 Schools spread across three Faculties – and these offer a range of courses from undergraduate degree to postgraduate certificate, diploma, Masters to PhD and Professional Doctorate programmes in disciplines as diverse as say, engineering, law, nursing, sports science and art. It

should be particularly noted (from the point of view of this study) that much of the provision at post-graduate level utilises the University's (online) 'virtual learning environment'[2] as a means of delivery and support. In fact, the University had 1,744 (post-graduate) part-time students following courses in this manner during the 2007-08 session which is a highly significant proportion considering that the total number of enrolments for part-time taught qualifications at this level at that time was 2,789 or 62.53%.

The University's mission is "To inspire and enable the transformation of individuals, economies and societies" while its vision is "To be internationally recognised for excellence in professional education and applied research."[3] In keeping with these ideals, the University has earned a very strong reputation for delivering professional, career-focused postgraduate courses being repeatedly identified, for instance, in recent editions of The Time's University Guide as having one of the best records in the UK for graduate employment and as a top modern university in the UK (O'Leary, 2009).

1.3.2 HISTORY OF ONLINE LEARNING AT SCOTIA UNIVERSITY

Scotia University had already 'bought into' the concept of online learning – a subset of eLearning in so far as it refers to the means of delivery learning materials online – a few years before I arrived in 2002. Indeed, the University was quite advanced in this aspect of eLearning compared to some other UK Higher Education institutions. The Centre for Distance and Open Learning (CDOL) was established in 1997 and in October 1999 after research and evaluation the Cyber Study was launched with the aim of developing 'a learning community where attention to flexibility, quality and support will make SU the university of choice for lifelong learning, irrespective of where an individual lives and works'[4]. This first virtual learning environment was a licensed platform that had been originally developed for a United States' based research institute. CDOL subsequently introduced greater functionality to the

[2] A virtual learning environment is basically an interface that allows educationalists to manage disparate learning applications and resources to create online courses.
[3] From Scotia University's website
[4] http://www.thebild.org/ContentFiles/confih.ppt

platform through various add-ons, most significantly for content management and online discussion forums that were missing in the original set-up; and the University in the end acquired the rights to the use of the platform when ESRI themselves stopped using it. Cyber Study was complemented by iNTRA, an intranet which provided online support to on-campus students and, for a more limited time, by an online community platform – the Cyber Community Zone.

In 2002, CDOL was given the enhanced status, being renamed the Department of eLearning Advancement (DeLA). The University's Strategic Plan of that year also gave over significant space (compared to later Plans) to online learning when it stated that

> "The Department of eLearning Advancement, iNTRA, Cyber Study and the Cyber Community Zone for staff development opportunities are providing us with tools that deliver a supportive environment for all learners, but is especially valuable to assist students from under-represented groups. This environment is also allowing us to address the part-time and lifelong learning agenda more effectively …whilst there is great scope for increased part time activity, we consider it doubtful that this will be achieved other than through the mechanism of ODL and full time courses" (Department of eLearning Advancement, 2002, p. 5).

A year later, in 2003, a study that was commissioned by the University from and undertaken by the Higher Education Information Services Trust (HEIST) showed the University to be the fourth biggest Higher Educational provider of online and distance learning in the UK with the largest number of students in Scotland accessing their course via such approaches (HEIST, 2003). When the University's Strategic policy document "Scotia University – Heading for 2010" (2003) was published in October of that year there was also space given over to a considered further expansion of both web-based and blended learning options.

Two further versions of Cyber Study were launched in the years following 1999, but although an in-department evaluation had occurred in 2002 recommending staying with this Virtual Learning Environment, it was increasingly a challenge to maintain and further develop given the quite unique nature of this environment and the rather limited resources and expertise that were available to maintain it. There was also a

desire to make community based interactive learning easier to implement and more closely integrate administrative and content management databases with the system. Elsewhere, a new Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle) was starting to accrue a following in education and – to its advantage – it used open source (i.e. no cost) software, was backed by a worldwide community of expertise, could accommodate the desired add-ons and was designed around sound pedagogical ('constructivist') online principles (Dougiamas, 1998).

At the start of 2005-06 session, version 3 of Cyber Study – that had attempted to merge both the Virtual Learning Environment and iINTRA – collapsed spectacularly on launch amidst much recrimination. The timing couldn't have been worse for both the academic staff and the students. Soon afterwards but unrelated, two of Cyber Study's most prominent supporters at senior level left the University. The situation gave rise to a desire to look again at the Virtual Learning Environment and to see whether there were alternative systems out there that could do a better job on a number of fronts. This time, an external consultant was employed.

A grant was obtained for this purpose in late 2005 through the European Social Fund's EQUAL programme. It formed part of the Trades Union Council's "High Road" project that was concerned with developing virtual learning environments and Information and Communication Technology solutions for future workforce needs. Following the completion of appraisal which involved a practical evaluation, a literature review and consultation with a range of staff, a very strong recommendation was made and adopted by Academic Council in June 2006 to move the University's online learning provision over to Moodle as from September 2007 (Scotia University, 2006). Further changes occurred shortly afterwards, in July of that year, when DeLA was merged with the Centre for the Underpinning of Learning and Teaching (CULT) to enable a greater integration of technology with the pedagogical aspects of designing and delivering eLearning. A senior level appointment made as head of this new department.

A Moodle Implementation Project Board was constituted to oversee the implementation of the new environment and a Virtual Learning Environment Working Group[5] was also brought together with representation from across the institution to act to ensure that Uni Moodle, as it became, would meet the needs of users. Somewhat disappointingly though within the University's latest Strategic plan, "A Clear Way Ahead – Setting Out Our Strategic Concerns", (Scotia University, 2007) there is no direct reference to either eLearning or even technology enhanced learning, let alone online learning except perhaps indirectly through the statements that the University seeks to "develop our distance learning provision to meet the needs of individuals and their employers in accessing our services in ways which are both effective and efficient" (p. 15) and that it will "continue to develop our continuous professional development provision, in terms of content and delivery methods, in response to the needs of our markets" (p. 16). On the other hand, an Enhancement-Led Institutional Review carried out by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in that same year (2007) did, amongst other matters, acknowledge the University's commitment to eLearning, including online learning.

Moreover, within the University's Implementation Plan for 2008/09, an intention was announced to "develop and implement a University-wide approach to the further development and support of the University's e-Learning capability" and as part of this exercise, an eLearning benchmarking investigation was instigated with the assistance of an external consultant, Professor Paul Nellert (at that time Director of the Blended Learning Department of the University of Loamshire). On the other hand, a brief so-called Teaching and Learning "Strategy" emanating from a senior most consultative body, University's Academic Council, had also appeared in June 2008 (Scotia University, 2008a) and it yet again failed to draw out any direct link with technology enhanced learning. It is of course troubling that this "strategy" document could have been defined as such by the Academic Council and my view is confirmed by a comment made in the eLearning Benchmarking Report which was published less than a year later (Nellert & Bain, 2009). This quite categorically states

[5] Within the completion of the Moodle Implementation Project this working group has now been replaced by the eLearning Advisory Group (eLAG) reporting to the University's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Sub-Committee of the Academic Council

that “The University does not have a ‘learning and teaching strategy’…” (p. 5), with the report’s first recommendation stating that “There is a need for a clear learning and teaching strategy which provides an indication of SU’s approach to using learning technology and/or the emphasis on learning and teaching specific to SU” (p. 6).

1.4 THIS STUDY

1.4.1 REASONS BEHIND THE RESEARCH

As we have seen in the early part of this chapter, university leaders are being asked to improve learning and teaching to meet certain national standards, and to deliver measurable outcomes in other areas of their institutions’ operations. Although eLearning has been advocated as a way of meeting student needs more effectively and efficiently, where/when appropriately online, as part of a blended approach with face-to-face teaching or just by face-to-face teaching itself, a challenge remains: How can senior management best facilitate this development and how can they best empower staff and encourage participation, aligning individual needs with organisational goals? If such technology enhanced learning is to become a successfully sustained and widespread feature in course provision, then a good deal of consideration needs to be invested in pre-planning and continuing support of a human, technical and financial nature. Changes introduced will in particular challenge existing cultures and have to be addressed in ways that lead to the initiatives being readily backed by a majority of academic staff. As will be seen, previous research suggests that considerable consultation and levels of participation will need to occur at each stage.

In this light, I decided to undertake research into one particular sub-set of eLearning, online learning because this was where the most considerable investment had been made by the University. I was firstly keen to discover what sort of feelings had been directly aroused in managers, academic and academically-related staff as a result of this initiative and the way that it was pursued by senior university management; and

secondly, within a key element of the initiative, the feelings of these same individuals towards the CPD provided for the academic staff involved.

The research was carried out within the context of Scotia University, an institution which I have had strong employment links with. The HEIST study (2003) earlier referred to had suggested that a considerable number of the SU academics interviewed who were at that stage already active in online learning felt disinclined to be further involved in this area. The reasons for such an attitude included most significantly the small number of CPD opportunities that were offered by the University in this area at that juncture and the lack of recognised development time in which to work on the advancement of online courses. It was a problem that had also been identified by a slightly earlier academic study conducted amongst academic staff in another university by Juwah and Northcote (2002) and one of the factors identified by Newton (2003) in his UK wide study. These issues held and still hold serious consequences (if they continued to exist), leading less involved staff to no doubt question the degree to which the institution is deeply committed to online learning as a mainstream arm of its provision and its expressed desire to offer high quality courses and support through these means. All these findings prompted in me a felt need for further research and the start of this, my own study, in 2005.

I had became interested in the topic of eLearning, and online learning in particular, through my earlier responsibilities for flexible, resourced based learning which progressed into open learning, then in the late 1990's into online learning and for the last 8 years a direct involvement with blended learning. My professional interest furthermore saw me studying online in the early 2000's for a postgraduate certificate, followed by a Masters degree in Teaching and Learning in Online Learning through California State University. I have always believed that technology should be the servant of pedagogy, but it has particularly shaped my views since being employed in Higher Education to support postgraduate certificate qualification training in teaching and learning. I was also interested in change management, having been involved as a change agent throughout my career in Adult, Further and Higher Education; and would always like to think that I held a natural concern for the

perception of colleagues to the changes that I and others in my situation were attempting to introduce. However, I lacked a direct in-depth research based awareness of how client groups actually viewed their lived-in experiences during such times of quite significant change. The opportunity to undertake such a (phenomenological) study as this at this level provided me with the means to address all these matters in a way that would satisfy a personal and professional curiosity, that would hopefully meet the requirements of the doctoral programme and that would ultimately also be of benefit to Scotia University.

1.4.2 SAMPLING OF EXPERIENCES AND ITS REVISION

The field research was initially conducted in the autumn of 2005 from a population sample made up of senior managers (University and academic), academic managers, academics and academically related change agents. However, the number of academic staff participants was relatively small and while the data collected gave some insight into how the phenomenon was experienced it became apparent to me that I should have given greater voice in the sample to the impressions of academic staff who were and remain the focus for change management in terms of the ongoing online learning initiative. In so doing, a more balanced study could be produced and a deeper, richer appreciation of the phenomenon might be obtained. Secondly, events had also moved relatively quickly shortly after I had completed my field research and was engaged with my analysis! The continuing dissatisfaction with the University's initial virtual learning environment, Cyber Study, the decision to consider a possible move to a different environment, the eventual decision to adopt Moodle and the way that this was prepared for in terms of continuing professional development made me want to delay completion of my investigation. This was in order to discover if lessons that were becoming apparent to me as a consequence of my initial investigations into the first learning environment had already been picked up on and would be approached in a different manner this time, and to see if the experiences of staff, and in particular those of the academic staff, were in consequence any way different too. Furthermore, in terms of practical value to the University, the research that had started out as an opportunity to appraise then current practices and to draw conclusions that would hopefully be of value to the University was going to be of far

less interest as a result of the rather different developments that were taking place in the course of the 2005-6 session and the next two. So, reflecting on all of these factors, I decided that it would be more pertinent to the subject of this study if I delayed further work on my research in terms of analysis until such time as preparations for and implementation of the new eventually chosen environment, Moodle, had been completed across the University. At that time, I would then pro-actively seek out voices from a larger sample of participants. All of these interviews subsequently took place in September and October of 2008.

1.4.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research study attempts to identify:

1. What were the perceptions of participants with regards to the introduction of online learning?

2. What were the perceptions of participants with regards the working practices that were encouraged and the working patterns that emerged?

3. What were seen by the participants to have been the character of the continuing professional support and development programmes in online learning that were offered?

4. Based on the participants' experiences were there any ways that measures in relation to the above areas could have been enhanced?

As will be seen, by adopting a phenomenological analysis, I hoped to be in a position to draw out and explore such 'as lived' experiences from different layers:

- University senior management
- Academic senior and middle managers
- Academics
- Academic related staff

with regards to the introduction and continuing development of online learning, the barriers and enabling possibilities as well as the support offered in terms of working practices and continuing professional development of academic staff. In doing so, I would be attempting to map essential themes that emerged from the data analysis, creating a greater understanding of the experiences of those involved during the 'window' of investigation, drawing conclusions and identifying implications.

1.4.4 HOW THE REMAINDER OF THIS STUDY IS SET OUT

Chapter 2, 'Literature Review': Investigates how the literature comments on areas pertinent to my study: organizational change, concepts of management and oversight for online learning, academic development, and the CPD of academic staff for online learning.

Chapter 3, 'Research Methodology': Looks at the challenges of undertaking 'inside' research within one's own place of employment; how the methodology for this particular research study was selected in order to offer a "best fit" for the focus of the investigation; and, finally, the strengths of the research framework that was adopted, along with the additional quality standards that have been introduced as part of the analysis.

Chapter 4, 'Themed Subjective Experiences': Following on from the content analysis of the transcripts, this chapter identifies the essential themes and sub-themes illustrated through participants' experiences of the phenomenon.

Chapter 5, 'Discussion, Findings, Implications and Recommendations': This final chapter is devoted to discussion of the study: the conclusions drawn from cognitive dissonance analysis, the relationship of the themed findings to the literature and new contributions to it and implications of the study with regards to the original research questions, the arising recommendations, the issues that remain unanswered and the scope for further research.

1.5 SUMMARY

The fastest growing sections of the world's advanced economies are now knowledge based. Universities can play a key role as engines of knowledge – connected with developing knowledge processes, exploiting knowledge possibilities, engaging its staff and students in such pursuits – and of subsequent wealth creation, rather than as places where knowledge just resides. Accordingly, a vastly increased demand for university places is likely, fuelled by the view of many governments that considerable economic advantage will be gained in this by expanding higher education. Online learning could provide an efficient and effective solution exploiting the technology that has fuelled the development of the "knowledge economy" emphasising (as it should do) authentic skills that are now required in the workplace and everyday decision-making. Political pressures in the UK at least have meant that there has been strong external moves, not always successful, to see the successful implementation of technology enhanced approaches to clearly defined standards in order to cost effectively skill or re-skill the work force. Such changes from the centre have been accompanied at the same time by greater scrutiny, less financial support and encouragement to be more entrepreneurial. A concern was and has been that Higher education might not be able to successfully address these challenges, culturally adverse as they were to traditional ways of working.

Scotia University was one of the early proponents of online learning in the UK. Stepping into this sort of provision allowed it to more adequately address the concept of a lifelong learning provision that had at that time been recently highlighted (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997). Because, however, the virtual learning environment first used as a platform had been customised and enhanced in-house it started to show its age rather quickly, being difficult to maintain in the face of much more heavily funded rivals. There was also concern that the virtual learning environment did not encourage the use of more engaging pedagogical practices. At an opportune time, a wide ranging re-evaluation of the

environment was pursued and a decision was made to move over to Moodle, an open source system that had accrued a following around the world and which was underscored in a much more robust way by sound pedagogical principles. Although the University's current strategic plan does not directly reference technology enhanced learning, indications that online learning and eLearning in general are becoming once again a focus can be seen through the creation of a super department connected with this area, which combined learning technology with academic practice; and the commissioning and completion of an eLearning benchmarking study (Nellert & Bain, 2009). On the other hand, this should be balanced by the fact that the University's relatively recently approved learning and teaching strategy (The Scotia University, 2008a) does not underline a direct link to the various ways in which technology could possibly support the academic development of the University.

To what extent were particular developments in online learning well managed and supported? Previous research has suggested more could have been achieved but that not enough support was available. So, this study will investigate – through a phenomenological analysis of the introduction of the two successive virtual learning environments – how change management was facilitated at Scotia University and the impressions of those who had directly experienced these changes. The population sample was originally made up of senior managers (University and academic), academic managers, academics and academically related change agents, but it was soon recognised by me that enlarging the sample to incorporate more academics would offer up a deeper and richer data picture of in-the-world experiences. Conducting interviews at a time when changes were again underway with regards the Virtual Leaning Environment could also pick up and incorporate impressionistic feedback on the change management strategies.

In the next chapter, I will be reviewing how the literature comments on areas pertinent to my study: organizational change, concepts of management and oversight for online learning, academic development, and the CPD of academic staff for online learning.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Birley and Moreland (1998) stress that any literature review should bring together (and critically appraise in a focused, pithy manner) as much literature as is relevant

to the question in hand. From the point of view of this study, it covered both direct sources (e.g. previous research, University documents and other official publications) and indirect ones (e.g. textbooks and research reviews). The examination of previously published work offered me a better mental grasp of the topic, enlarging my knowledge base/expertise, providing a conceptual framework for the organization of this information and offering focus to the research base (Kumar, 1999).

I set out to review the literature relating to effective change management for organizational change with particular reference to the introduction and ongoing development of e- and online learning; and an associated programme of CPD for academic staff. As will be observed from the list of references, the research covering these topics is in fact quite extensive but certain clearly identifiable themes, trains of thought, do reoccur and the aim of this section is to isolate, reference, and reflect on these particular studies in order to provide a heightened understanding of the forces at work.

For the purpose of undertaking this review and unearthing relevant literature, computer searches were conducted primarily through the online database services offered through subscribed journals using the Shibboleth authentication system, Google, Google Scholar and through the library catalogues of the University of Strathclyde and Scotia University. Possible relevant materials were in turn browsed electronically and/or physically depending on circumstances. The following vital search words were used in various combinations: online learning, eLearning, e-learning, virtual learning environments, change management, organizational change, innovation, university strategies, continuing professional development, staff development, learning communities, academics, academic staff, lecturers, tutors, managers, senior management, faculty, instructors. Other relevant sources of information came to my attention through indirect routes such as newspapers and online newsletters. It is important to note that in any investigative study connected with technology enhanced learning, where change is quite rapid, a continuing review of the relevant literature and other sources was felt necessary throughout the

investigative period including, where relevant studies came to my attention, during the analytical and writing up stages as well.

2.2 ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

2.2.1 GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Antonacopoulou, Ferdinand, Graca, and Easterby-Smith (2005) posit that organisational change is complex because it is unpredictable and because it does not happen in a straightforward linear way, is full of a "complex array of strategic, technological, structural and cultural systems that constitute integral aspects of organizational change" (p. 4). Unplanned factors that are part this medley are policies that are redefined, key leaders that leave the organisation, members in the organisation that change roles, new technology that is invented, reduced resources or the occurrence of conflict amongst the members (Fullan, 1993). Indeed, as Rycroft and Kash (1999) point out, instability in the marketplace is a crucial issue that has stymied many organisations grappling with large scale innovation (Schön, 1973). The ability to attain a final fixed or stable state is though an illusion which can never be achieved. Antonacopoulou, Ferdinand, Graca, and Easterby-Smith (2005, p. 9) quote Chia and King's statement (of 1998, p. 466) that "reality *is* change". Both Kotter and Zidle state that it is estimated that 65 to 70 per cent of organisational change fails because change is viewed as a special event and not as an ongoing mental, emotional and physical process of personal transition (Kotter, 1996; Zidle, 1998) – or as Antonacopoulou, Ferdinand, Graca, and Easterby-Smith (2005) put it "organization is simply a happening, or the momentary stabilization of a set of relations." (p. 9). In his research among a number of European universities, Clark (1998) found that for serious change to have occurred within an institution a decade was seen as a minimum time period for the change to be successfully embedded; and this will need to be addressed by senior management on an on-going basis rather than being often overlooked. The reason is often because – within an event-scenario – the norms, skills, values, beliefs, incentives and assumptions of the institution's members, their working relationships and any commitment to engage in dialogue about these that leads to reflective, deep-level learning are perceived by those in charge as taking up an unnecessary amount of time (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998).

2.2.2 LEADERSHIP

Traditionally, universities exhibited a characteristic decentralised organisational structure where decision-making and knowledge creation was carried out within semi-autonomous and specialised units (Weick, 1976). In recent years however, as Boezerooy (2006) comments, there has been a trend towards more centralised management structures and (as briefly mentioned in Chapter 1) business-like approaches – whereby various types of decisions traditionally taken by academics individually are now being increasingly made by senior managers who no longer see themselves or act as academics. It is, unfortunately all too easy, as Duke (2002, p. 136) suggests, for these senior managers to become a "closed, self-referencing system" and trying to impose changes in ways that struggle to establish out any long-lasting roots. Indeed, Nickols (2006) also sees any approach to change being very much a reflection of management's existing mindset and the extent to which change is really about adaptation. Organisations, it appears, often like to pose with ground-breaking policy initiatives but because the latter often threaten cultural norms they are shunted off to the periphery preventing them from "contaminating" what are seen by senior management as the purity of existing core functions (McClenney, 1998)

2.2.3 PRO-ACTIVE CONSULTATION

Ramsden (1998) observes that higher education institutions have been more effective in establishing financial and resource management processes to meet environmental changes, than establishing effective processes for the management of people. What is more, they will make the technology investment but do not match that with an investment in people. Leadership, he concludes, is definitely about taking charge of such change and effectively managing it. Pinchot (1985, p. 3) confirms that "In [a] time of rapid economic and technological change, the entrepreneurial spirit can be a unique and important advantage, but only if we learn to use it."

> "Creative leadership is required to shape the necessary vision through consultation, dialogue and expert advice, and to 'sell' the vision, and the

> operational process for its implementation, to teaching and support staff across the Institute." (McAlpine & Jackson, 2000, p. 65)

Kouzes and Posner (2000) have suggested that staff are more likely to follow such an entrepreneur if they are convinced that they fully understand the intentions of the leader and the initiative itself. Fullan (1991), Bates (1999), Gilbert (2001b), Dearlove (2002), McPherson (2003) and Welsh and Metcalf (2003) all conclude that the successful implementation of any plans will ultimately rest on academics agreeing that the proposals are reasonable and that they wish to be involved. Senior management could therefore do well to understand the situation from an ordinary academic's perspective:

> "Deep at the heart of effective academic leadership is an understanding of how academics work" (Ramsden, 1998, p. 13).

Surry suggests that senior management accordingly plan a strategy utilising Keller's ARCS (Attention, Relevance, Confidence and Satisfaction) motivational model (Surry, 2000). This states that a topic which grabs a practitioner's attention appears relevant to their needs, makes them feel confident that they can master it and which provides a certain satisfaction in doing so has a greater chance of successful implementation than one which does not contain these features.

Stiles and Yorke (2004) discovered that while many if not most educational institutions have learning and teaching strategies that make reference to eLearning they fail to tackle how it is best embedded in university everyday practices, preferring to concentrate on the introduction and/or implementation. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2009) also stresses that to carry through an eLearning based initiative at all levels a certain degree of fine detail must be included:

> "… the strategic implementation of e-learning requires institutions to define aims and objectives, to formulate clear definitions of e-learning and blended learning, and to consider targets for the adoption of [virtual learning environments] at programme and module level, in order to promote change effectively" (p. 8).

If such elements are absent, academic staff misunderstand the bigger picture – the context – in the longer term because they do not easily make a connection between mainstream policies, procedures, roles and responsibilities and eLearning. They often experience a natural degree of uncertainty during such times, requiring more information and knowledge on what is being implemented. Accordingly, Alexander (2001) suggests that senior management's "road map" for eLearning needs to clearly explain the reasons behind the move and how it will affect other aspects of the University's provision and services. Staff can then much more easily gain an understanding of why change is important and necessary (Betts, 1998; Edmonds, 1999; Oliver & Dempster, 2002).

As Bates (1999) confirms, there are often unrealistic expectations held by senior management for immediate results, especially in the light of the limited human resources that they have available. All too often, educational change initiatives have failed because they were pushed ahead by senior management and failed to address academic staff's concerns and values regarding teaching and learning (Robertson, 2008). Indeed, even though authoritarianism took somewhat longer to die, in 1950 McGregor observed that there is:

> "…an inescapable fact: we cannot successfully force people to work for management's objectives. The ancient conception that people do the work of the world only if they are forced to do so by threats or intimidation, or by the camouflaged authoritarian methods of paternalism, has been suffering from a lingering fatal illness for a quarter of a century. I venture the guess that it will be dead in another decade" (Quoted by Warren Bennis in his foreword to McGregor, 2006, p. xx).

If academic staff are to be fully involved/ have full ownership in the design, development and carrying out of the changes; they have to have this understanding of their new roles; an appreciation of eLearning both its usefulness and ease-of-use (Davis, 1989), while the results eventually produced need to be truly determinable (Lewis, 1998; Rockwell, Schauer, Fritz, & Marx, 2000; Welsh & Metcalf, 2003; Latchem, 2004). Such knowledge, created through understanding, encourages employees to change the environment they live in (Dixon, 1999, p. 3). If, on the other hand, people do not feel supported by a system, if they see it as punitive or

aggressive, they will not have a strong motivation to participate, change and improve (Martin, 1993, p. 154)

An institution has to turn itself – through its underlying philosophy and operational practices – into very much a learning organisation (McPherson, 2003) encouraging dialogue among staff and management about these matters, which in turn hopefully stimulate new and creative ways of doing and thinking that thrive on individuals who challenge themselves as well as the system.

> "Because of the central role that staff members play in the work of universities and colleges, any change, especially in core activities such as teaching and research, is completely dependent on their support. Presidents may dream visions, and vice presidents may design plans, and deans and departments may try to implement them, but without the support of staff members nothing will change" (Bates, 1999, p. 95).

In an attempt to allay such concerns, and in order to command a commitment to change at all levels, individuals need to be give a taste of power in the new context through the creation and operation of communities of practice (Angelo, 2003). The advantages emanating from such "stealthy" approaches (Browne and Shurville, 2006) include building shared trust by lowering social and interpersonal barriers to change; building shared motivation by collectively determining goals worth working toward and problems worth solving; building a shared language by developing a collective understanding of new concepts needed for transformation; designing backward from the standard vision and working forward to determine outcomes, strategies, and activities; and thinking and acting systematically (Angelo, 2003). Leaders should however be cautious about planning change efforts that are not carefully considered since change takes energy, time and resources – with new ideas constantly competing for attention and support.

Alternatively – or in addition – another way of instituting an inclusive, consultative framework could be achieved through the establishment of a central working group or "Teaching, Learning and Technology Roundtable" (Latchem & Hanna, 2001b; Ehrmann, 2002). Its purpose would be to maintain dialogue between the main

stakeholders: senior and middle management, the academic innovators, the perhaps often more reserved mainstream academics, academic support units and the student body. The roundtable would in turn link up with existing committees and networks across the institution to ensure that online developments move forward in close harmony with other academic visions and endeavours (Milheim, 2001) and academic-related interest groups. A challenge is to break down the barriers between organisational structures and cultures within and beyond the university:

> "An effective technology strategy works in both directions. From the top down, it is articulated through institutional objectives, sensitive to existing culture, constraints, strengths and weaknesses, and presented as a coherent, achievable set of goals with appropriate incentives and rewards. It must also move from the bottom-up where knowledge of teaching strategies, learning contexts and disciplinary expertise can be translated into action plans geared to achievement of institutional strategic objectives and so creating a sense of ownership at all levels of the institution" (Gunn, 1998, p. 142).

Such principles align themselves with the LASO Model (Uys, 2007) which views both a top-down and bottom-up movement creating the most effective change management. The roundtable would therefore seem to offer an excellent opportunity for addressing various visions (institutional, academic departmental and personal) for online learning, for ensuring at a general level that SWOT[6] analyses are in place for discussion and dissemination, and for making certain that issues of total quality management, continuing professional development (CPD) and adequate resourcing are not compromised.

Within such bodies as mentioned above, any innovation is however likely to produce conflict (Whitworth (2005). Even so, this should be seen in a positive light, as a creative process, and an eventual consensus being achieved amongst all parties should be seen as an innovation becoming embedded. It is therefore very important that quality standards are maintained, due recognition is paid to these opinions and reports that suggest otherwise with a considered judgement made only after substantive research and consultation has taken place. As Martinsuo (1996)

[6] Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

comments, a successful change of culture requires a recognition of the past, its achievements and disappointments, and a clear idea of future direction, structures and attitudes. At the end of the day, as the joint SFEFC/SHEFC E-Learning Group report (2003) indicates, it is crucial that such courseware and its support are regarded by all parties as academically sound and institutionally wise.

2.2.4 CHANGE AGENTS IN A MODEL OF CHANGE

Many models have in fact been developed to explain change within organisations (Land, 2001) and how it can be assisted. The classical one is that of "diffusion" and is particularly associated with the studies originally undertaken by Rogers (1995). When reading through its key aspects, links can also be made with other research previously mentioned in terms of how vital it is for at least a good majority of staff to feel at ease with their involvement and the degree of support that's called for throughout but most importantly at the start.

Rogers (1995) posits that a decision to adopt an innovation will be taken if individuals feel that the innovation: a) has some relative advantage over existing ideas or practices; b) fits in with an individual's existing values, beliefs, past experiences and needs; c) must not be too difficult or complex for an individual to understand or use; d) must be able to implement the innovation on a trial basis; and e) produce results that can be easily observed and confirmed as the correct ones. He generalised that innovations that have greater amounts of these particular features will be adopted more rapidly than other innovations.

Duderstadt (2000) points out that universities have become encrusted with policies, procedures, committees, and organisational layers that discourage risk taking and creativity. This could become a serious impediment to successful change and, as such, Rogers (1995) believed that an innovation can be much more successfully diffused within an organisation using informal communication channels rather than depending on distanced, formalised recommendations handed down from on high.

The use of change agents are, Rogers believes (1995), of great use in this respect. This role is not necessarily undertaken by a formal leader within the organisation, but rather one who supports an innovation at its early stages of development "even when it does not seem to accord with the strategic direction of the organisation" (Osborne & Brown, 2005, p. 135). Indeed, as McShane and Von Glinow (1998, p. 434) confirm, what is important is that these individuals should be aiming to create credibility, demonstrate genuine commitment, sustain movement, diagnose any problems, provide information, work across traditional boundaries and provide reassurance once the decision to adopt the innovation has been made (Bates, 1999; Bower, 2001; McLoughlin, 2000). They are "individuals who influence clients' innovation decisions in a direction deemed desirable by a change agency" although they balance their loyalty between the two groups they work for or with (Rogers, 1995, p. 27).

Rogers (1995) suggests that the success of any initiative will be the backing it ultimately receives from what is classified as the mainstream early and late majority innovator adopters, who normally make up 68% of the total staff. Once accepted by this group they can provide a trigger for the critical mass to take up the innovation (Pelliccione & Giddings, 2002). For significant change to occur such a 'critical mass' of individuals need to have adapted and implemented a given innovation and its rate of adoption should have become self-sustaining. However, even then, progress can be slow and in many cases painful (Candiotti & Clarke, 1998) because there could still be those who were somewhat sceptical about the change and who seek more compelling evidence of the benefits emanating from the change (Jaffee, 1998; Macchiusi & Trinidad, 2000). Indeed, Rogers (1995) believed that change will not be adopted by all at the same time, it will grow slowly and gradually in the beginning, and that a variety of strategies should be called upon to suit the different levels of predisposition to change (or "innovativeness") amongst the academic staff. Further, McPherson's research (2003) also reveals that subject discipline influences feelings towards, and the adoption of new learning technologies; while the attitudes of matching external professional bodies appear to have some additional effect on academics' attitudes (Traxler, 2004).

2.2.5 CULTURE AND RECOGNITION

Successive studies have clearly shown that academics are inhibited from getting involved with flexible learning initiatives (Clay, 1999; Spotts, 1999; MacKenzie & Staley, 2000; Kirkpatrick, 2001; Lee, 2001; Millheim, 2001; Butler & Sellbom, 2002; Williams, 2002; Hanson, 2003; Newton, 2003). There is a resistance not necessarily just because of the technology enhanced aspects but more because its development and introduction is perceived to have been ill thought through by senior management.

Traditionalist minded members of the academic staff will often feel that the jury is still out on relying on forms of eLearning as a qualitative and quantitative means of delivery. Bennett and Marsh (2002), the Coimbra Group of Universities (2002) and Whitworth (2005) observe that, compared to the long history of didactic approaches, there is relatively speaking not the same quantity of research evidence and personal experience to draw from to substantiate views as to the value of online learning as a mainstream activity. Globally also, concerns about over-inflated claims of online learning adoption rates and educational transformations (Noble 1998; Dreyfus, 2001; Ayres & Grisham, 2003; Zemsky & Massy, 2004) have surfaced.

Some academics may indeed, right from the start, also remain unconvinced about the real motives for institutional involvement in such an initiative. The fact (referred to in Chapter 1) that there are financial pressures on universities to achieve significant cost savings may mean that a move a university into online learning could be seen by staff as a purely cost-cutting means of course delivery with little or no academic value whatsoever and that the eventual outcome could be a loss of jobs (Lynch & Collins, 2001) with an eventual dilution of standards. Those models that exist for costing online learning do not necessarily support the view that using technology is affordable and can encourage expansion (Wiles & Core, 2002). Mistakenly believing

in such propositions, the authors believe, threatens the maintenance of quality standards in teaching and learning.

Staff (and, for that matter, students) have a tacit knowledge and understanding of the familiar, traditional face-to-face teaching methods and the quality of this experience, i.e. the over-riding characteristic of student learning is that it is still largely based around physical contact and interaction. The movement to virtual delivery systems in fact challenges a deeply institutionalised feature of higher education (viz. the "private" domain of the lecture room) and the professional skills that have been developed and practiced there (Jaffee, 1998). As Annand comments: “If people matter more than technology, and machines are useful only if they contribute to a greater human (rather than economic) good, changes that are perceived threats to these ideals are opposed” (2007, p. 5).

Although Aldred (2003) saw Higher Education as “possibly one of the last bastions of conservatism” this attitude does not preclude any considered use of learning technology. Cuban’s research (2001) in fact intimates that academics do adopt technologies that match their beliefs about student learning and which add to the psychological rewards of teaching, that of those technologies selected all have adopted those that are reliable and useful in classrooms. They are only indifferent to changes that they see as irrelevant to their own practice, increasing their burden without adding benefits to their students’ learning or weakening their control in the classroom. (2001, p. 170).

Other research studies suggest wider issues enter into the equation. Clay (1999), Spotts (1999), Kirkpatrick (2001), Lee (2001), Milheim (2001), Hanson (2003) and Newton (2003) and variously ascribe academics’ reluctance to deficiencies in equipment and facilities to tackle new approaches; current poor technical and administrative support; a lack of perceived time; the pressure of research activities; a less than positive attitude of peers; a lack of official recognition for work with new technologies; intellectual property rights and ownership of materials produced; a general resistance to management-imposed approaches; as well as a scarcity of

appropriate CPD. Fear of the unknown is suggested by Bates (1999) as perhaps the biggest obstacle to change and is witnessed by anger targeted at the changes that fed the fear. Allaying these fears through substantive argument will also be something of a challenge. A majority of Lecturers have always seen themselves more as subject matter experts, rather than pedagogy experts thereby creating a tension between pedagogy and subject matter (Isaacs & Parker, 1997). It raises the possibility of a power shift and fears of inadequacy amongst some teaching staff; that the transmission skills some of them have been using in their teaching could well be seen as no value while the skills used by others to promote a much more active form of engagement provide a perfect match (King, 2001) - the teacher more of a facilitator and much less of a "sculptor" (Ljoså, 1998). Hanson (2009) too discovered a very powerful wish amongst her interviewees to protect what they saw as a cornerstone of their academic identity – their face-to-face teaching relationship with their students – that they feared would suffer if eLearning became predominant.

Meanwhile, Newton in his 2003 survey of academics in Computing and Information Studies departments found a healthy sense of 'having been there before' when senior management stated that the future lay online yet as with other policy initiatives they had not bothered to put in place an extrinsic reward structure to support it. Those surveyed therefore questioned the sincerity of those managers espousing its cause. Research studies suggest that if academics are to change their teaching practices, they do need to feel that the effort that they put into responding in a positive fashion is appreciated and that their other commitments will not suffer (Hanson, 2003; Shannon & Doube, 2003). This feeling is also supported by Pelliccoione and Giddings (2002) who posit that if a university wishes to lead on the issue of online learning then an appropriate level of support in this area as well – encompassing incentives, reward structures, recognition, training and effective leadership – definitely needs to be in place. As Marquard (1996, p. 97), in a quite Machiavellian observation, contends: "one of the most powerful management principles in the world is 'That which gets rewarded gets done'"!

2.3 CONCEPTS OF MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT FOR ONLINE LEARNING

2.3.1 NOTIONS OF CYBERSPACE

Assumptions and beliefs about cyberspace – i.e. "the worlds and domains generated by digital information and communications technologies" (Nayar, 2010, p. 1) – were in its early years mainly influenced by the concept of Technological Determinism. The latter holds that technology leads to changes in society that emerge from its introduction and use but that it does so in an autonomous fashion, limited only by the material resources available and (unlike "Social" determinism) independently of any social, cultural, economic and political contexts (Heidegger, 1977; Strobel and Tillberg-Web, 2008). Bell (2001) notes that "such a straightforward determinism retains a powerful influence on how people think and talk about things like cyberspace…" (p.66) and, as a philosophy, it became "an immensely powerful and now largely orthodox view of the nature of social change" (Williams, 1974, p. 13).

Libertarians as referenced by Hand (2008) and Mopas (2009) believed that these social changes – both nationally and internationally – would provide the key to greater prosperity, wealth and security. Social hierarchies, where power was something possessed by one group and exercised over another, would disappear, creating in their place, as Hand puts it, a new "cyber-republic of voluntary associations and interest groups" (2008, p. 20).

However, as Hand and Sandywell (2002) observe, the culture that actually came about was something rather more akin to agendas that had previously existed elsewhere:

> "The objective of transnational production remains the same – profit in the political sphere, hegemony in the political sphere and ideological domination in the cultural sphere… ". What is more they go on, "*Cyberculture* – the cultural dominant of cyber-imperialism – simply builds upon and further deepens the chronic social inequalities of class, gender and race created by the course of modern capitalism" (p. 202). Compared with what went before, it "simply

> provides patriarchal oppression and domination with more efficient tools" (p. 203).

Indeed, Habermas – quoted by Jeffries (2010) – concludes that the power of the individual is now rather hollow:

> "The liberal confidence of an autonomous life is now confined to the individual freedom of choice of consumers who are living off the drip-feed of contingent opportunity structures."

A commentator such as McNair (2000) though takes a far less pessimistic view when examining the UK's media landscape at the turn of the twenty first century. He reckons that:

> "The proliferation of various forms of public access broadcasting, such as political talk shows, TV and radio phone-ins, simulated 'people's parliaments' and the like, is the contemporary expression of" public places for informed debate while "the development of new information technologies such as email and the World Wide Web are changing the ways in which citizens can participate in and contribute to political debate with other citizens, and with members of journalistic and political elites" (p. 200).

This though Habermas (1989) would naturally deny, arguing that the so called public spheres are mere shams of enlightened discussion with the arms of the mass media attempting to manipulate opinions and create a consensus where none exists; whilst Baudrillard (1994) may well have regarded such displays that McNair mentions as mere media generated and state applauded simulations of a "reality", one in which the populace prefer to be entertained rather than be informed. Metcalfe (2006) suggests that perhaps such manipulation and control was meant to be!

> "In fact, rather than having its roots in democratic ideals, the term "cyberspace" derives from another classical reference, the Greek word *kubernetes*, meaning helmsmen or governor. Thus, at its core, the digital environment is framed by administrative issues and governance structures…" (p. 11).

2.3.2 ONLINE LEARNING AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

Similar debates have surfaced with regard to education as well. Indeed, as Kanuka (2008) highlights, a transformation of education was promised through cyberspace.

eLearning was going to offer the potential to radically change instruction and learning methods allowing for an enhanced student-centred approach to be introduced, which would in turn promote a higher order of understanding along sound social constructivist lines. It was an education system that, in its operations, would inevitably open up access, transcending the barriers of time and space. Mopas (2009) quotes McChesney (1999) who shared a belief the Internet should uphold a "vision of a non-commercial sharing community of scholars and, eventually, all citizens of the world" (p. 5).

Catherall (2006) was, on the other hand, troubled about such an uncritical leap into the eLearning format because it "is a technology in the earliest stages of development as a teaching method". In particular there has been a concern expressed over how Virtual Environments (VLEs), that rather ubiquitous feature of online delivery, have developed and whether they provide a true break with teaching's didactic past. Nunes (1999) references Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) geophilosophical work, translating it into a cyberspace setting. In doing so, he posits that the virtual topography of cyberspace can be considered as composed of both smooth (or a vast and unconstrained) and striated (or highly regulated) mixture. The smooth is seen as the "territory" of the nomad, the rhizomatic, the open steppe while the striated is instrumental, that of the hierarchically formulated city, the state. Such features can, Bayne (2004) believes, be equated to the characteristics of what often turns out to be the closed and regulated characteristics of a VLE:

> "Movement within the striated space of the virtual learning environment is…constrained to a back and forth motion within a closed space" while it follows formal hierarchical patterns "from the way it structures text (assuming a hierarchical organisation of sections identical to that found in print books) to its discussion fora and the way it organises its users" (p. 312).

VLEs can be seen as 'walled gardens' protecting costly, copyrighted learning materials, allowing for no gaps in their 'walls' against the outside world and integrating seamlessly with the other university management systems and replicating in many other respects traditional higher education features and standard practices (albeit through technological means). In so doing though, there is a danger that they

will fail to motivate and engage (Bayne, 2004) and to exploit the possibilities of achieving deeper learning experiences (Bayne 2005; Bayne, 2008; Hemmi, Bayne, and Land, 2009), passing over opportunities for the incorporation of more open, accessible, and engaging frameworks – in other words the smoother territories of Deleuze and Guattari – that have emerged through web 2.0 (or the 'social web') (Bayne, 2008; Land & Bayne, 2008; Wheeler, 2009).

2.3.3 EXERCISE OF POWER, CYBER-SURVEILLANCE AND CONTROL

Left as they are, Virtual Learning Environments can be seen to also take on a somewhat disturbing aspect. Epling, Timmons, and Wharrad (2003), Land and Bayne (2005), Wells (2006) and D'Urso (2006) all believe that Foucault's (1991) use of Bentham's "Panopticon" or cylinder shaped prison, the open cells of which were directly overlooked by centrally placed inspection house offers an unfortunately apt description of what has increasingly become a standard for the hierarchical power relationships in online learning. Such a concept exemplifies the belief that individuals can be controlled or made "docile" by an uncertainty over whether they are being constantly watched behind the shutters of the central inspection tower – or in this instance monitored by an electronic inspection "house" from within and beyond the Virtual Learning Environment. Power is out there but impossible to establish precisely. This "unequal gaze" allows for easier control through the sense of powerlessness and stress it generates. Indeed, Dawson (2006) for instance concluded from his research study that postings to discussion forums were influenced by the extent to which the students felt that they were under surveillance from both the university and its academic staff.

For academics watch over their students but at the same time are watched over by managers (Land & Bayne, 2005) with detailed information on user engagement or lack of it (Maltby & Mackie, 2009). Foucault saw the panopticon as a "network of relations from top to bottom" (1991, p. 77) and – with electronic forms of surveillance – it now has no technical limitations to its operations. We have entered the realms of what Poster (1990) terms the "Superpanopticon" (p. 93) or what Zuboff (1989) calls "information Panopticons" (p. 322). In the case of universities, the

emphasis has shifted from a special and relaxed relationship of the academic with colleagues and students to one that is more formal, "based on the relationship a worker has with the 'expert' information systems through which the performance records of students, peers and self are managed" (McWilliam, 2004, p. 158). Porter (2000) writes that:

> "It is hard to imagine better exemplars of perfect vigilance than computers, which ceaselessly track countless financial transactions, global weather conditions, satellite broadcasts, online chatroom conversations, etc. And their panoptic gaze extends to the labor of employees, such as data processors and telephone representatives, whose every keystroke or utterance is (or is potentially) recorded, timed, and assessed" (p. 52).

Everything is accessible now and can be accessed in the future. It can never be assumed that communications and browsing histories on a network can be really private, and by clicking on "delete" every detail of what was there can be taken to have been truly erased (McArthur, 2001).

2.3.4 NEW MANAGERIALISM

All of this can be linked to a desire by university management and external agencies to exercise a wider monitoring of the institution and its personnel, a setting similar to that already often found in the corporate sector (Noble, 1998; D'Urso, 2006). Indeed, Land (2006) believed that one theme revealed by his research was that "technology seemed to be interpreted by management" as bestowing a permission to intervene in academic practices that previously would have been unacceptable" (p. 103). Such instances of what is known as 'new managerialism' achieve their ends through a mixture of compliance, feelings of anxiety and – on the surface – appearances of rather paternalistic behaviour:

> "Although knowledge and technologies are being used to control and regulate individuals and populations…", the official version of things is that they are 'working in our interests', taking care of us', looking after us and watching over us 'for our own good' (Dahaner et al., 2000, p. 68)" (Wells, 2006, p. 11).

Davies (2003) sees such direction though as having a more menacing aspect:

> "The system itself is characterised as both natural and inevitable. Resistance to it by individuals…is constituted as ignorance of what the 'real' (financial) 'bottom-line' issues are, as sheer cussedness, or as a sign reminding management of individual workers' replaceability" (p. 93).

Challenges to the scheme of things by employees are objectionable, can easily be dismissed as unrealistic and result in severe consequences for those who make them. Staff need to work harder to be 'good enough' to address the new 'exacting challenges' (Davies, 2003, p. 95). Beckmann and Cooper (2004) highlight the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) as an example of one of the external pressures faced by universities and the way such measures impact on academic staff:

> "In Foucaudian terms, the RAE creates 'conditions of domination' (Foucault 1990, cited in Lotringer 1996: 434) within the 'life-worlds' of HE through a funding mechanism that serves to ensure compliance in the guise of 'assessment'. This disciplinary logic is profoundly worrying for it ritualises 'normalisation' within the education system and obstructs the development of alternative perspectives, practices and possibilities."

Indeed, such measures have naturally led to certain tensions developing between the priorities of the university as an administrative unit and the intellectual discourse of its academics. Wells (2006) quotes from a colleague who likened the process to one of "herding cats". Driving the cats into their cages offers control and ensures that they perform in a certain way. It will however not lead to an inclusive or harmonious situation and could be ultimately self-defeating:

> "It's not the quality assurance process that gains the reputation for a university and creates excitement for the students. It's the lively herd of cats that do it" (p. 5).

We in fact revisit aspects that were covered in the preceding section (2.2) of this chapter, with the managerial, audit culture failing to guarantee inclusivity for all academics, generating feelings of mistrust, stress and of a professionally and personally unfulfilled 'self' (McWilliam, 2004; Wells, 2006). Although surveillance can also be employed in a positive manner (Dawson, Burnett, & McArdle, 2005), as an aid to pick up on a need for support and provide a means to bring about improved understanding of the processes at work, Main (2004) suggests that fundamentally an

environment in which “an invisible and judgemental figure” (p. 342) is continually watching is not a healthy one. Beckmann and Cooper (2004) also remark that:

> “The fatal mixture of increased surveillance and control of education, combined with the pressure to conform to the demands of the market, generate bleak prospects for the development of diverse curricula and research projects, as well as critical models of teaching and learning.”

Instead, the adoption of a more social deterministic approach and listening to the viewpoints of all stakeholders offers opportunities that promote a more democratic and inclusive situation and – in so doing – a greater commitment to emerge (Cousin, 2005; Bijiker, 1995, as referenced by Smith, 2005). Otherwise, as Wheeler (2009) believes, the underlying message given out is that an eLearning initiative and its characterising features are seen being basically there for greater efficiency and productivity and employee control, to serve managerial ends rather than to try and also integrate with sound pedagogical theories and practices.

A new breed of change agent personnel – ‘managerial professionals’ – have also now emerged under this new managerial banner to play a more strategic role (Rhoades, 1996). These individuals are positioned between academics and administrators and include (as particularly applicable to this study) staff based in departments of academic development; and they use various means to further promote standards in quality assurance, to try and ensure that any risks taken in policy initiatives and by academic staff are minimalised (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002; McWilliam, 2004), that the institution’s profile within the national and international market-place is advanced on what is seen as a surefooted basis. For, as indicated in chapter 1, the information age that was enabled by the Internet has now opened up significant competitive, commercial possibilities for higher education on the now vitally important global stage. It’s a move much applauded by government and its quality assurance and funding agencies in the belief that these business-like areas of performability are far superior to the unbusiness-like ones – such as the discovery of truth – that operated in the past (McWilliam, 2004; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Land, 2006). Such enterprise is exemplified in the terms used by vendors of Virtual Learning Environment platforms too. Within one VLE, WebCT, the role of the ‘administrator’ is very much

to the fore, the platform is ‘an academic enterprise system’, and an example of ‘onscreen real estate’” (Land, 2006, pp. 101-102). It certainly also highlights to practitioners such as Dreyfus (2001) and Noble (1998) the extent to which academic standards and freedoms have been eroded in what they would see as the blind pursuit of commodification of knowledge (Usher and Edwards, 1998) and, with it, commercial gain. It is also at the expense of those transformative learning opportunities (Cullen, 2005) that were promised during the early, heady days of what has been termed “technological utopianism” (Strobel & Tillberg-Webb, 2008).

2.4 ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

2.4.1 INTRODUCTION: CONCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

The overall shape and focus of CPD of academic staff, or academic development is a reflection of such changing contexts. It results in a dynamic synergy (Taylor, 2005) which Carew, Lefoe, Bell, and Armour (2008) conceptualise as “elastic practice” (p. 63) with cultures, inter-relationships between the stakeholders, the wider institutional and the still wider uncertainties of the higher education ‘new’ managerial landscape all influencing the final outcomes in various ways (Land, 2001; Reid, 2002; Carew, Lefoe, Bell, & Armour, 2008; Gosling, 2009b). What is more – and has been seen – university education has itself changed in recent decades. The existing institutions have expanded in response to demand and new ones recognised, they have become more managerial and business-like in outlook, there are a greater range of disciplines being studied, technology enhanced and student centred learning has emerged and deployed, there is increased diversity in the student population, while the work-loads of academic staff have become heavier and their roles more complex (Brew & Boud, 1996).

CPD has traditionally been associated with training provision of a “technical-rational or technocratic” nature (Lester, 2009) that is input-based and offers rational solutions to standard problems. There has however been a growing appreciation over the last 25 years, building on the concepts closely associated with Schön (1983), that informal

experiential learning through reflection in and on action offers an additional and powerful way of improving the quality of academic practice. This "reflective or creative-interpretative" model (Lester, 2009) along with the technocratic one nowadays commonly encompasses the make-up of CPD for academic staff or what is also termed 'academic development'. Accordingly, since the late 1980s academic development units have been moving from what was primarily just a service/modernist function with respect to areas including lecturer training, curriculum design and learning technologies to a post-modernist stance that incorporates and practices an equally important reflective model of CPD (Carew, Lefoe, Bell, & Armour, 2008; Gosling, 2009a, 2009b). Central to this position is the backing of wider innovatory strategies and research to enhance teaching and learning practices; and these moves are underscored through an espousal of and involvement with a scholarship of teaching and learning approach, a self-reflective "litmus test" (Hoessler, Britnell, & Stockley, 2010, p. 81) for isolating and informing best techniques and practices:

> "[It] contributes to teaching and scholarly teaching by building a foundation of theory-based and rigorously tested techniques that educational developers and university instructors can use." What is more, "Beyond the classroom, scholarship of teaching and learning can also inform and examine educational development practices" (Hoessler, Britnell, & Stockley, 2010, p. 83).

Indeed, as Havnes and Stensaker (2006) point out, a developer's academic and organisational credibility in the eyes of academic colleagues in part relies on this very research capability: "To increase their own legitimacy as trustworthy carriers of knowledge on quality improvement issues, they have to depend much more on the academic basis of their own work" (p. 14).

2.4.2 A BALANCING ACT

Prior to the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education's report (1997), academic development was an area that was somewhat sidelined within universities priorities (Clegg, 2003). The professional concerns held by academic development units in terms of promoting educational change and innovation (evident to an extent before the Report) have now however been seized upon by senior university executives and external agencies as a way of helping to embed the 'new' managerial

agenda promoted by that document (Gosling, 2009a). In general terms though, academic developers' strategic deployment should not be seen as surprising because the units were themselves established at the centre on the initiative of senior management rather than on demand from the academic areas of the institution (Harland & Staniforthb, 2003; Manathunga, 2007). Candy (1996) though believes that the management side have adopted what he terms a "somewhat simplistic view that academic productivity may be enhanced through 'developing' staff" (p. 8) and while the move of academic development into the spotlight has naturally been well received by the units concerned "…the price to be paid in engaging in this Faustian pact may be high" (Gosling, 2009b). In taking on an enhanced role:

> "…might they not be seen as agents of a coercive administration, forcing people to alter their work, to over-ride their ideologies, to give up a measure of academic freedom, and in a sense to change who they are? Is that an ethical thing for educational developers to do?" (Knight & Wilcox, 1998, p. 100).

Senior management may therefore be party to a challenge that makes it more difficult for academic developers to establish credibility, with the unit's staff "trapped in that painful space between managerial quality-assurance agendas and critical, personal understandings of the roles and purposes of educational development" (Manathunga, 2007, p. 29). Accordingly, the concepts behind sound teaching and learning principles and practices that the developers support may well be put at risk by a management more concerned with the rather different values and ideologies driving market and income driven goals (Gosling, 2009b, 2010), not only affecting the culture of academic development but also how the developers work, see themselves and others see them (Land, 2000, 2001; Handal, 2008) further bewildering departmental/school academic staff (Land, 2004, 2008; Lee & McWilliam, 2008). What is more, torn as they are between subscribing to what Land (2001, p. 8) describes as a "domesticating tendency" (i.e. characterised by a practice that fits in with official policies and cultures) and trying to display a "liberating tendency" (i.e. that seeks a transformative approach to practice and culture), academic developers can equally become bewildered by this "*paradoxical* identity, involving both domestication and critique, perceived as powerful and powerless, modernist and

postmodern, both with and sometimes against the work of colleagues" (Land, 2008, p. 135). They could with some justification feel that they are being used (or thought by others to be used) by senior management in such contexts and having conceded their ability to express independent opinion:

> "It is not that the developers concerned are necessarily opposed to the broader aims of such developments but they are concerned at the way their own practices might be mobilised, or perceived to be mobilised, in what end to be mainly domesticating agendas, with insufficient space to critique and surface the contradictions and incoherences of the ideologies inscribed within these agendas" (Land, 2008, p. 142).

As a centrally constituted unit, academic development is regarded with a certain suspicion in any event (Land, 2008). As Gosling (2009a) reveals, the number of academic staff (compared to learning technology and administrative personnel) who are part of such bodies and therefore available to carry out crucial development work is normally quite low (3.8 in pre-1992 UK universities and only 2.9 in post-1992 UK institutions). Its culture and image can be affected accordingly. What is more, the more educational developers side with management the even less standing they will have with discipline-based managers and lecturing staff (Havnes & Stensaker, 2006). Operating with funding that has been "top sliced" from the faculties' budget causes a certain degree of resentment as well (even though the figures may not be relatively large). Therein lies a danger of them becoming what Hicks (2005) quotes one developer terming themselves as "the ham in the sandwich", caught up and exposed to any ill-feeling generated between the centre and those in the schools/departments.

On the other hand, and setting aside the more obvious CPD endeavours, an academic development unit can be of significant professional advantage of school/departmental lecturing staff in terms of providing: (a) "the right language with which to (re)think their practice…" (Clegg, 2009, p. 410); and (b) a more direct line of communication between lecturers and university-wide senior managers (Clegg, 2003). Indeed, academic developers in such roles are often more politically aware of how the university operates and skilled at living within the system (Knapper, 2000), creating at least some freedom of action for themselves.

2.4.3 ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

As was also touched upon in section 2.3.4, the 'new' managerial order with its technocratic paradigm unfortunately still however poses a danger that academic development will be in the main driven from the centre ignoring the individual needs and cultures of the disciplines and delivering support through means that can more easily audited and quality controlled (Boud, 1999; McWilliam, 2002; Crawford, 2007). "For those academics who are sustained by what flourishes in their disciplinary garden, the call to a culture of 'performativity' is one to replace what sustains the scholar in favour of what sustains a market-driven economy" (McWilliam, 2002, pp. 8-9). What is more, attendances can also be low if only traditionally delivered, formal CPD opportunities are offered because of timing, rigidity and the lack of relevance to Lecturers' own workplace and particular problems faced there (Naidoo, 2005; Housego & Anderson, 2007; Gosling, 2009b).

It is therefore vital that developers come forward with alternative approaches that recognise these considerations but which are still effective and innovative too (Naidoo, 2005; Housego & Anderson, 2007). Candy (1996) believes that parallels need to be drawn here with knowledge based organizations (rather than the corporate area). In the former "the best employees/colleagues/professionals are those who are able to develop non-standardized solutions to non-recurrent problems" (p. 9). Indeed Housego and Anderson (2007) observe that while newer lecturers were especially most enthusiastic for formal workshops and short courses as these addressed more immediate pedagogical needs facing them, in their experience academic colleagues generally derive significant benefit from informal development opportunities.

2.4.4 ADDRESSING SUBJECT SPECIALIST NEEDS

Jenkins (1996) notes that different disciplines possess their own special pedagogic concerns and these should also be sufficiently acknowledged within the formal and informal development opportunities that are available to academic staff. As suggested above (in sections 2.4.3 and 2.2.5), a failure to recognise the importance to a lecturer of their discipline can also in part explain the ineffectiveness and the low

uptake of the institution's academic development provision. Boud (1999) agrees, remarking that academic development needs to take place at – or elements of it in conjunction with – their local place of practice: "Central programmes can challenge the taken-for-grantedness of local ways of operating, and local work can ensure that new initiatives are embedded in changing work patterns of departments" (p. 5). Reciprocal peer learning (or communities of practice) within a workplace setting is acknowledged as a particularly effective means of self-help at a local level (Fullan, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Boud, 1999; Cox, 2002; Uys & Tulloch, 2007) with development initially built up and argued from colleagues' disciplinary context and then taken a stage further by being reflected upon and refined within an inter-disciplinary discourse – rather than the other way around (Jenkins, 1996; Hanrahan, Ryan, & Duncan, 2001; Rowland, 2001; Hung & Nichani, 2002; Rowland, 2002; Clegg, 2003; Oliver, 2003; Russell, 2009). It is here that academic developers can then appropriately and skilfully assist them in a manner that local ownership of the process is beneficially retained (Jenkins, 1996). Housego and Anderson (2007) conclude that "There could be quite a payoff for just a few short hours discussion between an inquisitive, committed teacher and a vigilant, opportunistic developer."

Although calling for careful co-ordination between the centre and the schools/departments, a holistic or integrated model could therefore emphasise the ways in which the activities of academic developers and academic staff are interrelated and nourish each other through a collaborative process, hopefully causing self-reflection on individual experiences, and offering rich opportunities for cross-disciplinary dialogue and appropriate levels of support from different levels of the institution. It could in overall terms offer opportunities "where teachers are helped to explore their conceptions of learning and teaching and their related strategies" (Reid, 2002, pp. 4-5) and – even if such a measure is a challenge to fully implement – it should, Hicks believes, be regarded as the "most robust and effective" way forward. (1999, p. 48).

2.4.5 SKILLS NEEDED FOR MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE

When entering into these situations, academic developers will however need a critical ability to relate to colleagues and to understand their needs and problems (Gosling, 2010), conversing with the stakeholders involved (Webb, 1996) to "re-integrate" academic values in a more assured and coherent manner (Rowland, 2002). Land (2000) posits that while such an "interpretative-hermeneutic" orientation is (out of the twelve that he identified), the "most sophisticated and radical" option for academic development, he also emphasises the need on the part of the developer to possess "particular interpersonal skills and a high degree of communicative competence" (p. 22).

Roxå, Olsson, and Mårtensson (2007) suggest that for collaboration to succeed academic colleagues must feel comfortable, that academic developers should be professionally focused on assisting particular needs, that the latter will not influenced by external forces, and that any matters discussed will remain confidential. Handal (2008) though recommends that academic developers adopt more directional mannerisms: That of a 'change agent'; and of a 'midwife' (further confirming tendencies first noted by Land (2001)). The former mannerism addresses a strategic agenda and has a certain direction in mind; while in the 'midwife' role the assistance, support and nurturing of academic staff's development is uppermost. These are of course two extremes neither of which Handal recommends be fully implemented. Instead, he advances the notion of the "critical friend" as the ideal combination where having constructed a trusting relationship the academic developer encourages academic colleagues to problem solve through the reflective or creative-interpretative model (Lester, 2009) mentioned earlier. He (i.e. Handal) acknowledges and stresses that it

> "… takes time to build and it takes positive experiences on both sides to legitimise it. It demands a combination of honesty and tact and is first and foremost based on theoretical and experiential knowledge of teaching and learning in higher education. The critical friend has to have something to contribute in terms of analyses, perspectives and advice, but it must be in keeping with the goals and intentions that the teacher (or department) has in mind" (2008, p. 66).

The nature of such advice recalls issues that were previously raised in section 2.2.4 of this chapter.

Academic developers have also successfully taken on the role of knowledge brokers (Hughes, 2009), criss-crossing an institution, working across disciplines, engaging in "processes of translation, coordination, and alignment between perspectives" (Wenger, 1998, p. 109), making it "knowledge that "serves locally" at a given time; knowledge that has been de- and reassembled" (Meyer, 2010, p. 123). Benefits are therefore brought to both sides by informal collaborative initiatives: They are greatly valued by academic developers as a means of working with lecturing staff (Gosling, 2010) while Ferman (2002) confirms from her research that academics found such experiences "professionally enriching" (p. 150). "Continuing professional development that genuinely opened up the possibility of dialogue across ranks and functions", writes Clegg, "might create more open and understanding workplaces" (2003, p. 47), mediating between the 'realities' of the world faced by the university and the core values and beliefs held by the academic staff (Blackmore & Blackwell, 2006).

Despite its collegial credentials, however, academic developers need to be wary of even collaborative learning lending support to a 'new' managerial agenda (Hanrahan, Ryan, and Duncan, 2001; Land, 2008). This is because the confession of past 'sins' that could emerge from dialogues with academic developers might be held against the lecturer(s) involved as a deviation from the institutional market-driven goal. Secondly, the support that is on offer from the academic development unit can easily come across (unless the process is sympathetically handled) as basically having a deficit function, redressing past mistakes and recalling the practices of Foucauldian surveillance mentioned in a preceding section (2.3.3) of this chapter rather than the desired for creation of a culture that builds and develops individuals in a self-reflective manner (Candy, 1996).

2.5 CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMIC STAFF FOR ONLINE LEARNING

2.5.1 STATUS OF SUPPORT OFFERED

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2009) remarks that the rapid development of eLearning including online learning over recent years poses challenges for institutions not just in relation to support and resources but also with regards to Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Without an appropriate strategy for the latter an institution's schemes for online education are not going to progress beyond a pilot stage (Salmon, 2004). It is, as Taylor (2003) describes it in his study, "the catalyst which allows the evolutionary process to move forward less catastrophically…" (p. 75). Indeed, as Taylor (2003) and also Maguire (2005) point out, if a move towards online learning is to be seen as strategically important, then policies and practices regarding CPD (especially in areas of pedagogy) have to be seen as major areas of concern. Salmon (2005) also states that:

> "No VLE will ever be enough in itself to create great eLearning…It just cannot be successful without appropriate, well-supported and focused human intervention, good learning design or pedagogical input and the sensitive handling of the process over time by trained online tutors" (p. 203).

There are some generic changes to the traditional responsibilities of the academic as teacher that have emerged in online teaching. These include them adopting the roles of: being a guide rather than a lecturer (providing guidance and scaffolding, assisting students to develop complex thinking skills, and challenging thinking); being a 'connector' between group members to support establishing relations in an online community; being a facilitator of ongoing communication and group processes; being an educational designer of online courses; and being a technology support person for students (Herrington & Oliver, 2001). These roles are all consistent, as mentioned earlier, with a shifting from a teaching to a learning focus, and a loosening of teacher control over students' learning (Ljoså, 1998; King, 2001; Hanson, 2009).

Elgort (2005) concludes from her experiences that staff who merely upload lecture notes online fail to appreciate what can possibly be achieved using these more

considered techniques. As Zemsky and Massy (2004) indicate, the very ease with which individuals can access and manipulate the virtual learning environment can have drawbacks in terms of adopting a quality approach to online learning and, in turn, on the learning experience in general:

> "A number of people are coming to believe that the rapid introduction of course management tools have actually reduced elearning's impact on the way most faculty teach. Blackboard and WebCT [virtual learning environments] make it almost too easy for faculty to transfer their standard teaching materials to the Web…… All faculty really need are the rudimentary electronic library skills that most have already mastered. Blackboard and WebCT allow the faculty users to respond, when asked, 'Are you involved in e-learning?' by saying, 'Yes, my courses are already online!'" (Zemsky & Massy, 2004, p. 53).

In this respect, Taylor, Lopez, and Quadrelli highlighted the differences as between "reforming" and "re-formatting" (1996, p. 90) teaching and learning. In the former, fundamental pedagogical changes are necessary; in the latter the method of delivery changes, but little else (de Castell, Bryson, & Jenson, 2002).

2.5.2 A RESPONSIVE CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROVISION

Inglis, Ling, and Joosten (1999) observe that academic staff have been traditionally appointed for their subject expertise rather than any proficiency in the areas of pedagogical design and information and communications technology (ICT) and CPD at one stage had a rather unimportant status generally (Lewis, 1998; HESDA, 2002). Friedman, Watts, Croston, and Durkin's research (2002) discovered it was often difficult to get academics to participate in CPD although, on the other hand, Bates (1999) noted that there appeared to be increasing frustration amongst academic staff at the lack of CPD support at institutional level! Bamber (2009) however believes that of late – thanks to the implementation of the National Framework Agreement on the modernisation of Pay Structures in the UK – CPD in general has recently developed a higher profile. To that could be added the implementation of the National Professional Standards Framework (Higher Education Academy, 2006). It still begs the question though, whether this has had any real impact as a whole on the

transformation of Higher Education teaching and learning. Russell (2009) for instance concludes it hasn't.

Section 2.2.5 of this chapter highlighted the fact that research studies of a few years ago had shown that that there was a scarcity of appropriate CPD in this area. More recently, Russell (2009) also feels that the opportunities offered still do not try to make a connection with existing practices. Such a lack of alignment is she feels both a symptom and cause of the slow adoption of new learning technologies. Designing and providing effective, high quality CPD is though still quite a challenge. Would-be clients amongst the academic staff may be often unfamiliar with the character of these technologies and therefore unable to pinpoint their support needs (Johnston & McCormack, 1996; Fox, 1999). This is confirmed by other studies undertaken by Jaffee (1998), Rockwell, Schauer, Fritz, and Marx (2000) and Shannon and Doube (2004). They agreed and concluded that academic staff development opportunities should be offered at various levels of expertise, most especially for those academics who have not been previously involved with flexible learning initiatives.

Further, as Sharpe, Benfield and, Francis (2006) uncovered in their reflective study surrounding one university's experience there were really powerful benefits that emerged from allowing strategies to be developed at faculty/school levels to meet their particular curriculum needs. Such a devolution made the whole process much more relevant. To assist with this, Bates (1999) suggests a distributed organisational structure with a fairly large professional centre and a network of support units at departmental level. "To engage large numbers of academics," comments Salmon (2005, p. 205), "any approach must seek to ensure that ownership, not only of content but also of pedagogy, continues to lie directly within academic departments, but also recognizes that a wide variety of supportive mechanisms must underpin the continued developments."

Research quoted by Newton (2003) and that undertaken by Lee (2001) also emphasise the direct relationship between the CPD support provided to staff and their motivation and commitment. The staff can also easily be put off by the nature

of the experience. McKenzie (1998) believed that with any CPD there was a need to place the adult learner at the centre of the experience which they often weren't. This is confirmed through another study written by Carr-Chellman and Duchastel (2000) which showed that where CPD workshops for online learning existed in the past they were often delivered in a face-to-face, teacher-directed fashion and – as confirmed by other researchers in the area - this provided only a second hand experience of online technology through a limited learning style (Deepwell & Syson, 1999; Kolbo & Turnage, 2002). Buckley's investigation (2002) found that such workshops failed to convert because they encouraged little affective involvement. His comments are supported by the views of Battersby (1999) who observed that, at a both practical and psychological level, such sessions too often failed to empower and emancipate those who attended. Ultimately, in order to be truly effective, people must take ownership of their professional development. Professionals must be willing to expand their knowledge base since "knowledge is the basis for permission to practice and for decisions that are made with respect to the unique needs of clients" (Darling-Hammond, 1989, p. 67).

Singh, O'Donoghue, and Worton (2005) point out it will also be self-defeating if CPD for the design and facilitating of such courses concentrates solely on the use of the hardware and software alone. Rather, as Rodes, Knapczyk, and Chapman (2000) stress, the success of any online learning provision that will be highly dependent on it reflecting a sound underpinning of web-based pedagogy at all stages. It was, observe Jones and Lau (2009), the misguided belief of many who drove the first generation of eLearning that technology alone could somehow transform traditionally delivered courseware if it was just posted up online – a factor encouraged (as was commented upon earlier) by the ease by which learning materials could be incorporated into virtual learning environments.. It was an unsurprising failure in terms of engaging the support of students and indeed that of academics. "Asking university teaching academics to understand and support the importance of moving to a more open and student-centred model of learning, without an understanding of learning theory, is a difficult thing to achieve" (Aldred, 2003). Such an awareness needs to be made available through a range of means at the same time. What Elgort (2005) terms as an

“e-learning chasm” or conflict opens up if the two components of technology and pedagogy are at different stages of the eLearning innovation cycle, resulting in wasteful counter-productivity.

The literature reveals however that it is often a problem for some individuals to undertake CPD when only full-blown/traditionally delivered courses are available (Carr-Chellman & Duchastel, 2000). Indeed, CPD that is on offer also has to prove attractive enough to triumph over the limited amount of time that academic staff have at their disposal for such matters after teaching and research (Felton & Evans, 2002; Kolbo & Turnage, 2002; Shephard, Haslam, Hutchings, & Furneaux, 2004) and – increasingly significantly in recent years – administration (Tight, 2009). Then there are the part-time or contract staff, who need to earn a livelihood and who just cannot necessarily afford to give up working hours or bear the additional associated costs of participating. As Barrington (1999) highlights, the number of people in these two latter categories has grown significantly in recent years and their needs are still not being adequately addressed (HESDA, 2002). Ultimately, it is vitally important that no one here is just left to “muddle through” (Joint SFEFC/SHEFC E-Learning Group, 2003) and some more practically orientated, flexible learning opportunities should be developed and put in place.

2.5.3 INTRODUCING AUTHENTICITY: BLENDED APPROACHES

Already referenced conclusions reached by Deepwell and Syson (1999) and Kolbo and Turnage (2002) regarding the use of a traditional classroom based approach to the development of online learning facilitating and learning skills confirmed its limitations in terms of appealing to a wider range of preferred learning styles. What is more, as Salomon (1998) suggests, explicit advice from educational experts will not be enough to comprehend such techniques and address the strong pull of tradition (that has already been mentioned earlier). This is because: "When push comes to shove, teachers will teach the way they have been taught in the past [...] Thus if we want teachers to change, they will have to experience as students themselves the novel learning environment" (Salomon, 1998, p. 7). Indeed, fewer academics will themselves have experienced learning through tools now available for use with

online learning management systems (such as online discussion, chat, podcasting and blogs); while most of their students have grown up with the internet, mobile phones and instant messaging (Oblinger, 2003, 2005).

Building on the concept of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), it is posited that a much greater understanding of how to best teach learning online can be attained through the creation and delivery of "blended" CPD courses (i.e. combining face-to-face workshop attendance and online delivery). This is underscored by research from both Winograd (2000) and Bennett and Marsh (2002) who believe that this sort of provision is appealing enough to overcome resistance to change, be more easily accessed by the intended audience than more conventional single-faceted formats and offer that all-important greater "ownership" of the CPD that was emphasised earlier. Al-Mahmood and McLoughlin (2004) too felt from their own experience of studying within a blended setting that it was extremely valuable in terms of moving beyond standard classroom pedagogical approaches to reflecting on what were the possibilities here to effectively facilitate student-centred learning. They conclude that:

> "Professional development for online teaching needs to consider the centrality of enabling teachers to become aware of how students experience e-learning, and this can best be achieved by involving teachers in student roles. This form of experiential learning triggers reflection at a deep level and improves praxis" (p.44).

In essence, such an approach ideally incorporates a "scaffolding" process whereby course members begin in a reassuringly familiar face-to-face setting (Fitzgibbon & Jones, 2004). There then follows a period of facilitating under observation within a CPD online classroom to be followed by a lengthier phase of online facilitating practice within an actual course. Such periods of online immersion, where trainee facilitators are working all together or in small groups within socially interactive and reflective learning environments can thereby offer an enhanced 'real life' understanding of online learning roles and clarify implicit methodologies – with learning preferences/styles further accommodated through the provision of the initial face-to-face introduction mentioned above and through both self-paced print-based and online instructional materials (Macpherson, 1997; Collis & Moonen, 2001;

Taylor, 2003; Shephard, Haslam, Hutchings, & Furneaux, 2004). As Lau and Woods (2009) reason:

> "….introduction and training are important ways of conveying to the users the knowledge and skills needed to form initial beliefs and attitudes, whereas direct-use experience provides the users with the necessary means to reinvent and more realistically define their expectations about the use and consequences of the learning object" (p. 340).

It furthermore fits in with Fullan's more general belief (1991) that a number of sequential sessions, where individuals have time in between sessions to digest and practice new concept and ideas (with some access to help) are much more effective than the most stimulating one-off workshop. Finally, Herrington and Oliver (1995) also observe that such authentic nature again fits in very well with the Situated Learning school of thought (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and, within education, the work of Brown, Collins and Duguid who in 1989 first postulated that learning is most encouraged when it occurs within context.

In terms of offering authentic challenges, consideration should also be given to how to particularly align the course. While Bennett, Priest, and Macpherson (1999) successfully offered their colleagues a short online course in a completely different field of study by way of inducting them into online teaching and learning, other researchers have felt that an enhanced awareness is gained rather through programmes that concentrate on teaching and learning within participants' subject or work-related contexts. This allows them to build an understanding that more swiftly extends their present teaching activity and culture (Biggs, 1999; Moran & Myringer, 1999; Spotts, 1999; Collis & Moonen, 2001; Oliver & Dempster, 2002). Such an approach was, for example, very well addressed through one online professional development course that faced participants with critical issues affecting the life at a fictitious university (MacKenzie & Staley, 2000). In a novel twist to CPD in this area, experienced online practitioners at Monash University in Australia role-play different types of students often experienced in online classes for colleagues new to this form of learning provision so that obtain realistic experience of facilitating here (Weaver & Kish, 2003). This particular exercise not only offered a realistic

experience but also provided the students with a model to use when they were developing and delivering their own subject based online courses.

2.5.4 SCALEABLE CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

> "Changing practice is a formative process; it requires engagement and recurrent development cycles in which innovative products and pedagogies are fashioned, used, and refined….Changing faculty behaviour requires transformative faculty development experiences" (Buckley, 2002, p. 32).

Academic staff have a lot to remember when moving into the online field and it is often rapidly forgotten if not utilised immediately (Felton & Evans, 2002) and poor attendances at staff development events can – if nothing else is provided – prove to be a huge barrier when trying to implement cultural change (Aldred, 2003). These are in turn serious drawbacks to the provision of formalised CPD provision and background support for practitioners. The pace of change also now often means that time-frames for the development of online curricular provision are getting even shorter (Shomaker, 1998). Indeed, Sharpe, Benfield and Francis (2006) confirm that in their experience knowledge gained from any CPD delivered out of context is anyway short-lived. More effective is staff development that comes from doing it when the need arises as a result of particular course developments. This help at a local level can also be assisted by the establishment of an online site to showcase examples of good practice elsewhere in the particular curriculum area (Aldred, 2003; Mahony & Wozniak, 2005) or the through the availability of online toolkits that contain both downloadable free software and guidance (Beggan & Morgan, 2008). As such, the use of Web technology enables professional development to be a constant continuing process.

What is more, there is often in general a lack of well skilled staff developers with sufficient experience and understanding of both traditional and online learning and competent to facilitate formal CPD sessions in these areas (Moran & Myringer, 1999). Consequently, in addition to the instructional designs touched on earlier educational developers need to be more creative in their approaches. A rolling strand

of even more innovative, scalable and staff-centred support is called for. Some universities have, for instance, reformed their educational development units into flexible/online learning “one-stop shops” with drop-in facilities and staffed by a multi-discipline team of academics, administrators, technicians and managers. Academics can thereby easily benefit from the expertise that is to hand in a wide range of related areas (O’Hagan, 2003; Bell & Bell, 2005). Indeed, an investigative study by Scotia University (Scotia University, 2005) identified a feeling that access to work spaces that were away from students would be helpful when developing skills and materials. Another approach has been to offer this and a wider, accessible range of academic support services online (Donovan & Macklin, 1998). The value of such a development was also confirmed in the Scotia University study (Scotia University, 2005).

Cravener (1999), Engeldinger and Love (1998), Collis and Moonen (2001) and Oliver and Dempster (2002) too advance the notion of just-in-time CPD through a more general 1:1 face-to-face development strategy. Within the latter proposal, expert colleagues would be used as trainers, with academics receiving assistance on their own familiar equipment, when it is convenient, in their own offices, and so build up their self-confidence through development styled to suit their particular needs. It is inevitably a high cost approach but the value of such individual assistance would also lie, for example, in enabling a staff development unit to extend their safety net to those previously not so easily reached, including part-time staff. The latter might in addition access support by means of a call centre. As Hitch and MacBrayne (2003) reflect, such a provision could deal not just with the traditional “help desk” technical enquiries but also with advice on online learning issues. Indeed, Gilbert (2001a) feels that even if this facility was initially just wanted for aid with basic applications (e.g. word processing) certain barriers would have been lowered; and enquiries might then more easily made about alternative (technology assisted) teaching approaches. Special attention must, however, to be paid to the character and disposition of anyone selected for such a crucial front-of-house/interpersonal role (Deepwell & Syson, 1999), a comment previously made (in section 2.4.5) with regards to academic CPD support generally.

2.5.5 COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Communities of practice (CoPs) have become a very attractive construct, perhaps even a *buzz word* for learning design in recent years (Smith, 2003, 2009). In communities of practice knowledge is socially constructed and made real within a non-threatening collaborative space where active learning – discussion, reflection and understanding – can occur amongst participants. While the social behaviour seen in a community of practice is recognized as age-old (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002), explicit use of the term *community of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and its place in workplace learning is a much more recent occurrence (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Allee, 2000; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002; Saint-Onge & Wallace, 2003).

In fact, the rise in the popularity of CoPs in other fields of life and work has encouraged educational practitioners to reflect on the nature of the learning process practiced within their institutions. After all, according to Jonassen, Peck and Wilson (1999), human learning involves community and true-life experiences lacking in the lecture theatre and seminar room:

> "In the real world, when people need to learn something, they usually do not remove themselves from their normal situations and force themselves into sterile rooms to listen to lectures on formal principles about what they are doing. Rather, they tend to form work groups (practice communities), assign roles, teach and support each other, and develop identities that are defined by the roles they play in support of the group…. In other words, learning results naturally from becoming a participating member of a community of practice" (p. 177).

Through their commitment to socially built understanding, CoPs can also be seen as being grounded in sound constructivist pedagogical practices (Buckley, 2002), including Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development" conjecture (Vygotsky, 1978) – where increased understanding will occur when working in close collaboration with more capable and competent colleagues – and Bandura's "Social Learning Theory" (1977) – where a positive experience of social interaction will reinforce the desire to adopt this behaviour subsequently. It further allows for the implementation of an experiential learning cycle – or spiral – within which an adult develops as a

result of their understanding (Kolb, 1984). Chism (2004) suggests that in the case of ongoing professional development, an understanding of such a cycle, of how academic staff develop as facilitators and the environmental support needed at various stages, can lead to more effective long-term change.

As was mentioned earlier in section 2.4.4 of this chapter, professional development can be usefully supplemented and empowered on a day-to-day group basis through the establishment and development of such reciprocal peer learning communities (Fullan, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Boud, 1999; Cox, 2002; Uys & Tulloch, 2007) – whether they are online, face-to-face, long- or short-life, course, team, departmental or cross-institutional. They offer a way of overcoming the traditional more isolationalist tendencies of academic life and allow the creation of a collaborative approach to working and an often more enjoyable, continuing form of CPD (Littlejohn, 2002).

> "…the psychological engagement required for reframing is not normally possible without a deeper level of involvement among stakeholders in the system. It occurs, for example, when participants take part in 'communities of practice' where new cultures are constructed through experiential learning and reworking of cognitive structure" Chapman (2002, p. 18).

CoPs are significant for eLearning in general because they offer a way of developing new knowledge across discipline boundaries in historically campus based only universities (Hung & Nichani, 2002; Moore, 2002; Oliver, 2003). Russell (2009) in fact suggests that cross-discipline networking is a key element in a successful embedding of such a concept. What is more, by engaging in such practices, they can directly address real and immediate requirements, focussing in on the matters that academic staff need to address within their own work environment, unravelling the resources to be accessed while accommodating the different learning styles of those involved (Engeldinger & Love, 1998; Gilbert, 2001b; Gold, 2001). Indeed, let us not forget educational developers themselves. Sharpe, Benfield and Francis (2006) suggested that such practices can be usefully applied to them as well. Where the institution has such staff based within schools/faculties to support particular curriculum needs as well as at the centre then the authors' study highlighted how

effective it was for the university's overall strategy to draw these individuals in from perhaps their relative solitude for informed exchanges on best practices and problem-solving.

Further, an authentic interactive learning experience can also be achieved within CoPs modelling the situations members should be offering their students. Indeed, if in fact organised online, these communities can yet again offer a direct experience of virtual learning and promote characteristics of effective use (Butler, 2001; Ellis & Phelps, 2000), effectively channelling sound theoretical approaches into everyday good practices. In such a set-up, D'Antoni (2003) also concludes that CoPs are a very sound way of honing skills in the preparation of high quality online learning resources. If the focus of the CoP is in fact the latter, it will be even better if instructional designers are attached to these groups (Taylor, 2003). Alternatively, as a number of research findings have commented, early adopters of online learning from amongst the academic staff can once more play a role in CPD and be appointed as advisers to less experienced colleagues (Vgotsky, 1978; Engeldinger & Love, 1998; Cravener, 1999; Collis & Moonen, 2001; Oliver & Dempster, 2002).

On the other hand, it should be noted that Breslin, Nicol, Grierson, and Wodehouse (2006) suggest that that noticeable barriers to cross-discipline teamwork in connection with eLearning exist, a disciplinary tribal culture that implicitly discourages members from integrating such media effectively into their own immediate teaching practices. Bateson (1979) describes discouragement of change as a general property of any social learning system:

> "[Tribe members'] ideas about nature, however fantastic, are supported by their social system; conversely the social system is supported by their ideas of nature. It thus becomes very difficult for the people, so doubly guided, to change their view either of nature or of the social system. For the benefits of stability, they pay the price of rigidity, living, as all human beings must, in an enormously complex network of mutually supporting presuppositions. The converse of this statement is that change will require various sorts of relaxation or contradiction within the system of presuppositions" (p. 134).

Most academics are primarily motivated by research in their discipline, even if teaching is something they enjoy (Metcalf, Rolfe, Stevens, & Weale, 2005) and they may also find themselves unwilling, because of peer pressure from within their particular discipline, to integrate eLearning media effectively into their teaching practices. What is more, although there has been a shift away in many universities from strictly discipline-based departments towards the formation of looser academic structures that offer trans-disciplinary categories of study, these groupings still espouse their own particular knowledge fields.

Be this as it may, if effective use is to be made of eLearning or online learning across the institution then it's worth repeating the point that academics – assisted by staff developers using previously highlighted skills – definitely need to find appropriate ways of acknowledging and making explicit their particular views in relation to learning, teaching and knowledge. This is because, as has been observed earlier, the overall strategy that drives the introduction of new technologies can be perceived as a threat. Chapman (2002) posits that any cross-institutional innovation in changes in teaching and learning methods should be best addressed through interdisciplinary sharing and the codifying of model practice:

> "[CoPs increase] the diversity of options available to lecturers who are seeking to introduce technology-supported innovations into their teaching. Once new forms of learning activity are articulated and shared, they become part of codified organisational knowledge, which can be embedded in forms of organisation support and embodied in the associated material resources and facilities – policy guidelines, funding for support services, virtual and physical learning spaces" (p. 15).

The successful embedding of CoPs may take considerable effort but the establishment and successful growth of cross-disciplinary "Faculty Learning Communities" as evident in the initiatives first launched at Miami University in the United States in 1979 illustrates it can indeed be achieved. Such groups present:

> "…a model that allows faculty to enhance their knowledge of learning – that thing that they are constantly engaged in – in a safe and affirming environment. By supporting faculty members, the ones engaged in the day-today mission of the university, they will be encouraged and empowered in all aspects of their professional life. Focusing on learning, the one commonality that ties the

campus together, can benefit the entire campus" (Layne, Froyd, Morgan, & Kenimer, 2002, p. 18).

2.5.6 OTHER AWARENESS RAISAING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACADEMIC STAFF

Finally, other scalable support ideas that encourage reflection on practice and consequences are mentioned by Frayer (1999), Surry (2000), Couvillon, Donlon, and Hendrix (2002), Kent (2003) and Latchem (2004). They variously include: personalised online help pages; informal one hour lunch workshops; newsletters; listservs/ discussion lists; teaching with technology presentations by already experienced practitioners; live teleconferenced link-ups to outside expertise; equipment upgrades; summer schools; book study groups that compile selected readings about online teaching and learning; accredited awards; teaching fellowships; sabbaticals, secondments, exchanges and shadowing; action research projects; induction sessions on the institution's online strategy, policies, procedures and available support for all newly appointed staff; and financial assistance to attend conferences.

2.6 SUMMARY

Previous research studies have revealed that, in times of change, people management skills are of critical importance. Accordingly, the development and launch of an effective online teaching and learning strategy to explain the bigger background rationale, the intended institutional response and circulated as part of a meaningful consultative process to address any academic staff concerns would be of positive benefit.

Fear is cited as the biggest obstacle to change and, as many (older) members of academic staff have become skilled using only traditional face-to-face didactic approaches, they understandably feel challenged and ill-equipped to face new technologically enhanced, student-centred means of teaching and learning. What is

more, they also need to be convinced as higher education practitioners that these methods possess real educational value.

In these respects, firstly, the establishment of a co-ordinating body addressing these issues and representative of all the main stakeholders, and including enthusiasts and sceptics, is seen as being of vital importance. This would greatly assist due discussion pertinent to the change management process, more easily allow that accommodation of a range of opinions and, as such, embed wider ownership, including on the important area of continuing professional development (CPD). Secondly, individuals and agencies – the change agents – have co-ordinating roles to play within such a framework in order that reassurance and guidance can be provided and innovatory practices can be suitably diffused.

In the early days of the World Wide Web, views on cyberspace and its potential were basically driven by feelings that changes in society were being determined by technology; and that these changes would bring about a social revolution. However, in reality, market driven forces put an end to this idealism and what freedoms were promised are now, in comparison, quite limited. In education, a similar utopianism flourished promising greater access and a student-centred approach. However, the emergence of Virtual Learning Environments did not, in the opinions of some, bode well from both a motivational point of view and a relaxed deeper student learning experience. Virtual Learning Environments can so easily take on board a quite sinister nature comparing the monitoring that goes on with that of a hidden presence that oversees not only students but, higher up, even the staff facilitators always being audited in terms of their performance and standards.

All of this can be linked to a greater desire by University management to introduce corporate style measures of quality control to appease governmental pressure and supplement diminished public funding by producing saleable packages of knowledge through marketplace initiatives. Staff now work to a regime that is very threatening if knowledge is not commodified in this manner and standards are not attained and

maintained in the process. It's an unhealthy situation, being at odds with the institution's intellectual traditions.

The overall shape and focus of Continuing professional development of academic staff, or academic development is a reflection of such changing contexts and the inter-relationship of various internal and external concerns. While academic development has always been associated with standard training purposes there is a growing appreciation that it should also incorporate a self-reflective model, appropriately supported by a scholarship of teaching and learning approach. To further the 'new' managerial agenda referred to in the previous paragraph senior university executive teams have now moved academic development units centre stage. While the latter are often grateful for the recognition there are questions over whether their closer links to management causes the academic unit to lose some credibility in the eyes of staff in the schools/departments and whether there are ways that any possible loss can be redressed, establishing an identity with services and support valued by all.

With much of academic individuality still emanating from the work they undertake within their subject discipline, the new managerial tendencies pose challenges in terms of how best to offer CPD opportunities here, bearing in mind that a formal generic provision is not so highly regarded in the first instance. It is suggested that workplace learning within reciprocal peer learning (or communities of practice) would instead more capably inform understanding locally and help academics to make a series of connections that could then be taken and deepened further at a holistic, cross-disciplinary level. This calls for the academic developer to operate in a light yet focussed way to hopefully produce positive results for both sides, encouraging reflective thoughts in line with institutional strategies yet still leaving the academic(s) concerned with a feeling of ownership of any generated insights.

With particular reference to online learning, research suggests that a systematic, pro-active and accessible professional development programme should be implemented to allow academic staff to become familiar with both the pedagogical skills and the

technological expertise that is needed for effective online learning. Indeed, without these pedagogical skills being developed, it is too easy for academics to post up quite oft-putting static courseware onto a virtual learning environment that fails to offer a deeper and sustained learning experience. As with academic development generally, such support that is offered to academics should occur at both central and most importantly customised at local levels in order that it can be wrapped around discipline specific needs. The literature also indicates that any induction process into online teaching and learning should best allow academic staff to gradually build up their confidence and expertise using a blended approach incorporating constructivist principles and authentic direct experience as an online student. Alongside this, the plethora of further scalable opportunities that have been tried out in this area suggests that there is merit in deploying these means in order to make CPD on additional aspects of online learning more immediately accessible whatever the situation. This can occur both through formal systems and more informal opportunities offered through reciprocal peer learning and communities of practice (as mentioned above in a general context). Such approaches can also be enhanced by running them alongside a range of other related events and activities.

In the next chapter, I look at: the challenges of undertaking ‘inside’ research within one’s own place of employment; how the methodology for this particular research study was selected in order to offer a “best fit” for the focus of the investigation; and, finally, the strengths of the research framework that was adopted, along with the additional quality standards that have been introduced as part of the analysis.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF BEING A 'DEEP INSIDER' RESEARCHER

Mercer (2007) points out that the last twenty years have seen an enormous growth around the world in the amount of small-scale educational practitioner research, mainly within these students' own organisations or institutions for logistical reasons, and particularly as the result in the growth of the number of professional Master and Professional Doctoral programmes now being offered. When pursuing these investigations they are "insiders" in the sense of being a participant in the research that is being undertaken. Rather, I was what Edwards (2002) defines as a *deep* inside researcher in that I was carrying out research and analysis in an institution, Scotia University, in which I had worked at least five years. He saw advantages and "hazards" (p. 76) arising from this situation, with Mercer (2007) also coming to a similar view likening it to "wielding a double-edged sword" (p. 12).

Right from the start, I faced the experience of wearing two different hats in terms of my two roles. As an employee within the University, I operated: a) within the boundaries of a formal hierarchical position and my job responsibilities as a change agent (with an officially agreed agenda); and b) within the informal relationship I held with colleagues and having a will to also help change the institution along my prejudiced lines! On the other hand, as a researcher I needed to adopt a much more, detached, reflective, neutral position; and so as to try and reinforce this role professionally as a researcher into the participants' 'as lived' experiences, I endeavoured all the time to reveal my own viewpoint as little as possible.

Yet the research process was filtered through my own lens. In terms of addressing a research study within an institution, I did not have to deal with shock in this respect: I had a knowledge and understanding of the background of the institution: its history, strategies, the links events, cultures and sub-cultures operating across the Institution. I probably also had access to documentation and perspectives that an "outsider" researcher might not have. Yet as van Manen (1990) observed, a problem of (hermeneutic) phenomenological enquiry is that the researcher often knows too much

beforehand about a phenomenon, both in terms of the topic professionally and in terms of the institution's relationship with it:

> Our commonsense "preunderstandings, our suppositions, assumptions, and the existing bodies of scientific knowledge, predispose us to interpret the nature of the phenomenon before we have even come to grips with the significance of the phenomenological question" (p. 46).

So, the impossibility of humanly bracketing these pre-existing influences means that they should be openly acknowledged and taken account of when pursuing this study if an 'as lived' analysis is to successfully emerge.

An overarching limitation related to my inexperience as a researcher in qualitative studies and particularly through the method of phenomenology. While, within the hermeneutic research process, I was being given the opportunity to "….become more experienced [myself]" (van Manen, 1990, p. 62), was the critical analysis and search for deeper understanding and connectiveness compromised by my being a novice researcher in this field? Did I take background details about the participants for granted? I had long-standing association with many of them (as will be mentioned section 3.4.2.1 of this chapter). While this might therefore give me greater credibility in their eyes and encourage greater rapport I was always concerned that it might cause me to respond to any of these participants during their interviews in ways that reflected that relationship rather than in a research focused way; that my perceptions might be dulled or be influenced as a consequence, allowing the interviews to go down certain unintended routes and also not see through certain remarks. In order to truly capture the participant's lived experiences, I was conscious of the need to avoid such potential pitfalls right from the beginning through – as will be referenced in section 3.4.2.5 – the use of an interview protocol and a firm yet flexible in detail sense of direction carried out with a resolve (mentioned earlier) not to reveal my own viewpoints or to give any impression of answers that they thought might be required.

The distinction between insider and outsider may however be less clear cut and a matter of degree all along (Mercer, 2007). When insiders become researchers within

their own institution they may well be regarded more as “outsiders”, subversive even, treated with a certain amount of suspicion, with their pre-existing opinions well known and as a consequence their neutrality questioned (Darra, 2008). It could also be a perception borne out of those who I was interviewing. Mercer (2007) thought she felt and was seen as an insider when interviewing fellow academics but felt an outsider when interviewing those members of management whom she had previously rarely spoken to. I too was aware (when interviewing participants who were managers and senior managers) of some caution in the ways in which they expressed themselves. This was especially disappointing within the earlier round of interviews in 2005 because it failed to produce the degree of rich, oriented and strong data (van Manen, 1990) that I had originally hoped for at that time.

There was also an ethical dilemma on my part if what could be seen as controversial information was divulged by participants should I ultimately make reference to it within the final study? Although certain safeguards were built-in, in terms of anonymity, it behoves the researcher in such instances to always check with the participant who uttered the comments first, subsequently alert them to what they said during an interview and ask for approval to include it. This I did in both at the member checking stage after transcription (as referenced in chapter 4, section 4) and, if applicable, at the drafting stages. Edwards (2002) raised a further dilemma, concerning the researcher. The latter would have to decide whether the disclosure of some controversial information might rebound and eventually have an effect upon their subsequent career.

3.2 RATIONALE FOR A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY

It is vitally important when carrying out a research study that there is cohesiveness in overall planning particularly to ensure that the steps, procedures and strategies for gathering and analysing the data are robust and well followed through (Polit & Hungler, 1999). A valid choice of methodology and, importantly, its consistent use thereafter is crucial to the success of the study. It will ensure auditability and will

help the reader to determine whether the research questions have been adequately addressed (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

The most common distinction is between quantitative and qualitative methodologies, between a positivist/normative method of a natural scientific enquiry and a non-positivist/interpretative methodology that forms a human scientific enquiry (Burns, 2000). Studies based around quantitative research emphasise "the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 16) while "…qualitative researchers [on the other hand] stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 16). In other words:

> "Qualitative research thus tends to start with 'what', 'how' and 'why' questions rather than the 'how much' or 'how many' questions. It is also concerned with examining these questions in the context of everyday life and each individual's meanings and explanations" (Draper, 2004, p. 642).

As such, the qualitative researcher is more involved with developing new or enhanced concepts from data and with understanding underlying processes, allowing the research findings to emerge from the most significant themes identified from the data analysis, without any restraints imposed by structured methods (Marshall, 1999, p. 419). It can, as Silverman (2004) posits, offer up a much deeper awareness of social phenomena than from purely quantitative studies, allowing complexities to be revealed and enabling differing perspectives to be explored more easily (Hammersley, 1993).

The method/methodology that is decided upon will depend on the research questions to be addressed and the philosophical angle from which the study is to be tackled. So, as the goal of this particular study is to understand a (complex) social phenomenon and practitioners' experiences of this phenomenon, it fits perfectly with the philosophy, strategies, and intentions of qualitative research and, in particular through posing *how*, *what* and *why* questions, an interpretive (qualitative) research paradigm. The latter emphasises reality as internally experienced (Sarantakos, 2004)

and socially constructed through interaction (Glesne, 2005). It is undertaken to understand the systems of meanings which individuals make use of to understand their world, incorporating both their feelings and their world views (Neuman, 2005).

3.2.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A common pattern running through qualitative investigations is a quest by the researcher to reveal meaning and understanding of social phenomena within the context of participants' perspectives and encounters:

> "…human action is seen as infused with meaning in terms of intentions, motives, beliefs, social rules and values, and that these factors must be taken into account in both understanding and explaining it" (Draper, 2004, p. 643).

Within the range of approaches that come together under the heading of qualitative research, phenomenology and grounded theory however are noticeable for the particular emphasis they place on the meaning of experience and understanding (Creswell, 2007). They both assume truth is socially constructed and explore as-lived experiences and interpretation of these (Patton, 2002).

There are other similarities between the two as well: They are both well structured, offering a similar pattern of data collection and data analysis, with the principles of starting from the data, of constant comparison and moving from descriptive to analytical categories. Also in both, the pre-existing knowledge and understanding of the researcher with reference to their study are acknowledged and accommodated so that the research can be tackled unimpeded in as open a way as possible (Starks & Trinidad, 2007).

However, the grounded theory approach seeks to isolate a core concept that will explain the whole, "to move beyond description and to generate or discover a theory, an abstract analytical schema of a process" (Creswell, 2007, pp. 62-63) – with researchers less focused (compared to phenomenology) on subjective experiences of individuals per se. Indeed, Christian (2009) concludes from his research that a major criticism of grounded theory is that it advances an unreflected view of data analysis;

while Bryman (2008, p.548) asserts that grounded theory "aims to uncover a reality external to social actors". Instead, Larkin, Watts and Clifton (2006) wrote about the:

> "…importance of phenomenology in its requirement to 'understand and 'give voice' to the concerns of participants; and the interpretative requirements to contextualise and 'make sense' of these claims and concerns" (p. 102) "... and to emphasise the experiential claims and concerns of the persons taking part in the study" (p. 104).

Giorgi (2005) maintains that a natural scientific method of investigation was designed to deal with the phenomena of nature, but not to deal with *experienced* phenomena. Phenomenology instead allows "a shift of focus from physical nature, cause-effect analyses, impersonal forces and their manipulation and control to human subjectivity, intentionality, the meaning of actions, and the freedom and responsibility that intrinsically belong to them" (p. 77). For the phenomenologist there is no such thing as objective truth: They do not view human experience as an unreliable source of data, but rather they see it as the cornerstone of knowledge about human phenomena. Reality is described in terms of how a human being understands or interprets their world, the world to which they are indestructibly connected. Feelings, perceptions and intuitions move centre stage and the meaning a person makes of their world, rather than the 'world' itself, is always primary. They are the experts in the topic under investigation, they are the knowers and it is the researcher's – in this case my – job to engage with their retrospective descriptions to arrive at an honest and trustworthy picture of the lived experience and the information that has been acquired.

As a research methodology, phenomenology needs to be a systematic, methodical, general and critical investigation of phenomena (Giorgi, 2005). Yet, at the same time, it should be "not unlike poetry" (van Manen, 1990, p. 13) in order to capture that more affective, deeper meaning just referred to. As far as the research questions posed for this study concerned phenomenology was an ideal research methodology for this particular dissertation.

3.3 TWO MAIN INFLUENCES ON PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Most phenomenological research in the first instance draws on the two towering figures of phenomenological philosophy, Edmund Husserl in connection with descriptive phenomenology and Martin Heidegger in connection with hermeneutic phenomenology (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

3.3.1 EDMUND HUSSERL AND DESCRIPTIVE PHENOMENOLOGY

Edmund Husserl, the founding father of phenomenology, in 1931 defined the philosophy as a descriptive analysis of the essence of pure consciousness (Husserl, 2002). He posited that every human being possesses a conscious awareness so if we want to build an understanding of the world that is the place to begin: "Consciousness is the only access human beings have to the world" (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). An *understanding* of the world can only be achieved through an awareness of something, a consciousness of something, a direct mental relationship, directed at (or 'intentional' about) a chosen object or phenomena. Anything that presents itself to consciousness is potentially of interest whether the thing is real or imagined, empirically measurable or subjectively felt; with intentionality offering up the meaning or content of a given experience, separate from the things they present or mean. This is the fundamental concept within Husserl's philosophy (Giorgi, 2005).

Intentionality is however only available following reflective analysis and to the exclusion of everything else. The latter state is termed by Husserl, "phenomenological reduction". To reach an intuitive understanding, researchers must become immersed in the phenomenon. In this way, the phenomena can be viewed by a clear mind to the exclusion of everything else and the pure "essence" of the phenomena – that "which makes a thing what it is" (van Manen, 1990, p. 10) – can be more easily identified. He believed that prior to and during the investigative

period, the researcher should try to incorporate within their approach the notion of 'bracketing' (or 'phenomenological reduction'). This entails a process of closing off prior knowledge, assumptions and expectations in order to approach investigations in a way that is unbiased as possible (van Manen, 1990), putting away of "…subjective or private feelings, preferences, inclinations, or expectations" (van Manen, 1990, p.185) that would act as a barrier to seeing the experience of the phenomena 'as it lived'. The researcher needs to adopt a scientific attitude and step back, so as to more adequately examine and describe the phenomenon. van Manen advised: "If one examines existing human science texts at the very outset then it may be more difficult to suspend one's interpretive understanding of the phenomenon. It is sound practice to attempt to address the phenomenological meaning of a phenomenon on one's own first" (1990, p. 76), remaining "alert to how they may colour every stage of the research process" (Cassell & Symon, 1994, p. 13). Yet as Lowes and Prowse (2001) pointed out:

> "Husserlian phenomenology…is difficult to reconcile with the idea that research is often generated by enthusiasm for and interest in a research topic" (p. 475).

Indeed, the likelihood of ever achieving such a bracketed state has been much questioned by researchers and philosophers (Lowes & Prowse, 2001).

3.3.2 MARTIN HEIDEGGER AND HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY

Martin Heidegger, the other great influence on the development of phenomenology, applied the methodologies of phenomenology to ontology, the study of the nature of existence (or being). While he acknowledged intentionality and the need for a theory of knowledge (or epistemology), he came to the conclusion that consciousness of things is not central to the human situation, it only applies if something goes wrong! He believed that rather than being observers of the surrounding world and needing access to it, we are in fact there in-the-world (or 'dasein') already trying to practically engage with phenomena. We have our experiences 'in the world' normally unselfconsciously and pre-reflectively *before* we stop to think about them. Intentionality is not a determined act but the constitution of consciousness itself. So,

when we study our relationship to the world, we should not just study the way we look upon it as being 'out there', outside consciousness. We should study most importantly the way we live in-the-world, our lived experiences, through our beliefs, experiences and preconceptions, for the world is indeed nothing more than a meaning structure lived in by us, and ultimately identical with ourselves. In other words, Heidegger believed that reality cannot be examined as an object separate from the individual. Phenomenology is not a philosophy with a scientific basis as Husserl believed. Prior understanding, preconceptions are an integral part of the research process and they should not be omitted or go unacknowledged (Lowes & Prowse, 2001). He thereby rejected Husserl's premise of suspending one's own knowledge, assumptions and expectations (i.e. the notion of bracketing) before/during an investigation. According to Heidegger (1962), there is no escape from the historical foundation of our understanding because it serves as an ontological base for our being-in-the world. So, Heidegger moved from the knowledge basis of Husserl's pure (or descriptive) approach to phenomenology to the hermeneutics (or interpretation) of ontology (or being) where he further refined the notion of intentionality (Richardson, 2003). In 1927 Heidegger (1962, p. 13) wrote:

> "Interpreting, we do not, so to speak, throw a signification over some naked thing which is present-at-hand, we do not stick a value on it, but when something within-the-world is encountered as such, the thing in question already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world and this involvement is one which gets laid out by the interpretation."

Hermeneutics is not just a process of describing thoughts and actions of participants. All of our thinking, feeling, remembering and so on is about something (van Manen, 1990) and the researcher, in following this philosophy, seeks to understand how individuals experience, make sense of and create meaning out of this experience. It is, according to Becker (1992, p. 11), "The source of all knowing and the basis of behaviour." The focus of the researcher is therefore "neither on the phenomenon nor the participants but rather on the dialogue of individuals with their contexts" and in "contemplating the meaning others make of objects or experiences" (Van der Mescht, 2004, p. 2). In other words, it is a reflective process and the goal "is to construct an evocative description [text] to human actions, behaviours, intentions,

and experiences as we meet them in the life-world." (van Manen, 1990, p. 19). The basis of the understanding process is achieved through what was termed the 'hermeneutic circle', a dynamic movement between the parts and the whole of texts to seek understanding. The meaning of the parts depends on the whole, and the meaning of the whole depends on the parts. From moving from parts of the experience to its whole and back again, the researcher is able to increase their engagement with the text and therefore their understanding of it (Laverty, 2003). The hermeneutic task becomes itself a questioning of things, whereby early understandings become replaced by more suitable projections, as it becomes clear what the meaning is. Interpretation is in other words an on-going process; and there is no one definitive interpretation of any given text. We shall return to the hermeneutic circle in the next chapter when examining the data analysis process adopted for this study.

3.4 A HUMAN SCIENCE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Data collection and analysis are defined by Burns and Grove (2003, p. 42) as "the precise, systematic gathering of information relevant to the research sub-problems." It is about "reducing the volume of raw information, sifting trivia from significance, identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal" (Patton, 2002, p. 432). This is a fluid and dynamic process, where decisions are made and then unmade or slightly altered and it in turn affects other aspects of the project.

I had decided on a hermeneutical approach to my research. I agreed with Lopez and Willis (2004) who found that within Husserlian pure phenomenology, essences "abstracted from lived experiences without a consideration of context is reflective of the values of traditional science" (p. 728). Also, I would have needed to shed prior knowledge in order to gain an appreciation of these essences. Instead, I was keen to enter and gain an understanding of the participant's lived circumstances and experiences merging my world and understanding with that of the participants to

create an analysis that was “oriented, strong, rich and deep” (van Manen, 1990, p. 151) .

A challenge for any researcher undertaking a study from either phenomenological standpoint was that the phenomenology of Husserl (2002) and Heidegger (1962), as described in the previous chapter, was written at a theoretical level and not intended for applied research. As van Manen (1990, p. 30) points out “the method of phenomenology is that there is no method” excepting the fact, as earlier mentioned, that there are traditions, principles and approaches that the researcher is required to remain faithful to. This absence of method has accordingly led later researchers to devise research approaches for both branches of phenomenology and, in the case of hermeneutical research, noticeably Gadamer (1975), Ricoeur (1981) and van Manen (1990).

After a review of the above frameworks I chose van Manen’s. It is very much an approach for investigating and interpreting lived experience or “human science” (van Manen, 1990, p. 2). van Manen sees Husserlian ‘pure’ phenomenology and Heideggerian interpretative/hermeneutic approach as being in a dialectical relationship, wanting to 'let things speak for themselves' while recognising that (social) phenomena needs to be interpreted so that the description can reawaken or show the reader the lived meaning or significance of the experience in a fuller or deeper manner (van Manen, 1990). It involves listening to and then reading attentively the stories of lived experience and being open to the phenomenon (i.e. acknowledging previous beliefs and experiences) as it is being described, identifying meaningful statements in individual responses; from these, developing a rich written description of the phenomenon; and then, arriving at the central profile that can offer an explanation of the behaviour or processes at work. The framework does not have in the conventional sense a step-by-step formula to follow for data collection and analysis. In fact the process could better be described as featuring a dynamic interplay / a back-and-forth movement between at least four of the six research activities occurring at any one time (van Manen, 1990, pp. 30-31):

> "[It] invites participants into an ongoing conversation, but does not provide a set methodology. Understanding occurs through a fusion of horizons, which is a dialectic between the preunderstandings of the research process, the interpretive framework and the sources of information" (Koch, 1995, p. 835).

Each of framework's research activities will now be described in more detail.

3.4.1 LOOKING AT A PHENOMENON THAT HOLDS SOME MEANING FOR THE RESEARCHER

This is the starting point for phenomenological research and refers to the researcher's commitment to the phenomenon under investigation. While involved with the study, they are "given over to some quest, a true task, a deep questioning of something that restores an original sense of what it means to be a thinker, researcher, a theorist" (van Manen, 1990, p. 31).

As a methodology, phenomenological research is different because it a "does not offer us the possibility of effective theory with which we can now explain and/or control the world, but rather it offers us the possibility of plausible insight which brings us in more direct contact with the world" (van Manen, 1984, p. 38). As a consequence, Heidegger's (1962) contention that 'understanding' and 'interpretation' are a priori ways of being-in-the-world has strongly influenced the way that I, as an educational developer and as a researcher, approached the study. In preparing to engage in it, I very much reflected on my own epistemology. Examining my own values and beliefs and surfacing personal biases, assumptions, and perspectives helped me, I feel, to remain true to the voices and experiences of the study's participants.

Indeed, as with the participants, I was incapable of total objectivity, facing a reality constructed by subjective experiences (Creswell, 2004), but this needs to be acknowledged up front. Whereas the quantitative researcher seeks to explain a phenomenon objectively and free of researcher bias (Morgan & Drury, 2003), qualitative researchers reveal their biases and examine the ways in which their position or experience relates to the issues being researched – making entries in field notes, for instance for future reference regarding their beliefs, presuppositions and

past experiences. This I did. van Manen, like Heidegger, proposed that it is only possible to interpret something according to one's own experience: "Hermeneutic phenomenology is a philosophy of the personal" (van Manen, 1990, p. 41). Particular issues that needed to be acknowledged are "…subjective or private feelings, preferences, inclinations, or expectations (van Manen, 1990, p. 185).

I have worked for more than 30 years within learning technology and educational development roles in adult, further and higher education, during which time the focus of my work has moved from technically supporting staff to develop educational resources and managing facilities for this purpose to being actively involved with developing staff in their capacity as educators. My teaching experience in further education was in the area of media studies and my qualifications include graduate qualifications in educational management, educational technology and a Masters Degree in Online and Distance Learning. I have always regarded myself as a change agent, that complex mix of leadership and partnership, having a belief in the view of initiatives that work best/are sustainable are well researched, educationally led, utilising opportunities provided for collaborative effort and are sympathetic as much as possible to the identifiable needs and feelings of colleagues. Indeed, this was a strong determining factor in why I chose this topic for my research and the approach that I adopted.

In my work philosophy I very much identify with Rogers' view (1969, 1996) that qualities such as authenticity, empathy and understanding are critical conditions not only for personal growth, but also indeed for the intellectual and educational development of educators and their students. Further, when he speaks of understanding as the basic condition of being human; by being heard the person is released from his or her loneliness (Rogers, 1996), his views have much in common with the phenomenological approach, with its focus on *hearing* and understanding the meaning individuals make of their "lived" worlds. Indeed, I believe that we should be much more frequently asking ourselves that most fundamental question – what is it like being in this situation? – borrowing other people's experiences as well as reflecting on our own experiences, searching for meanings (van Manen, 1995;

Koch, 1999). It is my contention that through this study, by interpreting shared meanings from the accounts they gave of their lived-experiences (Sorrell & Redmond, 1995), I would develop an ontological understanding of the world of the participants in this time of change.

There's been another somewhat similar influence on my thinking and professional beliefs down the years. It's a view that has been reinforced by the subjective educational management model that was first set out by Greenfield in 1973. Indeed, this model is very applicable to research studies into educational management using an interpretative phenomenological methodology. In Greenfield's view, structural charts do not offer a true picture of how an institution actually operates. They exist rather as a result of the dynamics between the drive, ideas and beliefs of each member of that institution:

> "…organizations cannot be separated from the people who inhabit them, an organization cannot be changed 'without cutting into something unexpectedly human'" (1973, p. 552).

> "If we see organizations not as imposed on man, but as created by him, we begin to ask some different questions about organizations. In this view, individuals not only create the organization, they *are* the organization" (1973, p. 556).

If an organization is to change in a meaningful way, far more emphasis therefore has to be placed around trying to change the values and views of each member of the institution, the interpretations that *they* place on events:

> "Shifting the external trappings of organisation, which we may call organisational structure if we wish, turns out to be easier than altering the deeper meanings and purposes which people express through organisations…we cannot solve organisational problems by either abolishing or improving structure alone; we must look at their human foundations" (1973, p. 565).

My first encounter with Greenfield's views (and indeed the concept of phenomenology) was when I was undertaking an Open University course in Educational Management in the late 1980's. I immediately made a connection as its

tenets tallied with my pre-existing reflections on what it means to achieve successful change management.

3.4.2 INVESTIGATING EXPERIENCE AS WE LIVE IT RATHER THAN AS WE CONCEPTUALISE IT

Interviewing is by far the most common data gathering method in qualitative research and it is specifically dominant in phenomenological research (Mason, 2002) where remaining close to the actual experience is very important. Firstly, "it may be used as a means for exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon"; and secondly, as "a conversational relation with a partner (interviewee) to draw out the meaning of an experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 66). To investigate experience as we live it rather than viewing it in abstract "means re-learning to look at the world by re-awakening the basic experience of the world" (Merleau-Ponty's 1962 viewpoint interpreted by van Manen, 1990, p. 31). Indeed, the deeper goal is asking the question: What is the nature of this phenomenon as an essentially human experience (van Manen, 1990, p. 62)? It confirms the theoretical premise of the hermeneutic phenomenological methodology which is that all human experience is context bound.

The activity here involves reflecting upon experience whilst at the same time putting to one side pre-existing suppositions, assumptions and causality in relation to that experience. The concern is primarily as a way of reporting how something is seen and felt from participants' perspective. So, rather than seeking a judgement about facts or reality, the aim is to gain participant's understanding, opinions and expressions of feelings.

3.4.2.1 Sampling of views

A population sample is a subset of the identified target population that share some common characteristics as defined by the sampling criteria established for the study (Polit & Hungler, 1999; Burns & Grove, 2003). When arriving at participants for phenomenological research the researcher should be trying to leave the research open to a full range of possible elements and relationships that can be used to reveal the

phenomenological essence. Lincoln and Guba (1985), Patton (2002), Burns and Grove (2003), Sarantakos (2004) and Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) all define this type of sampling as "purposeful sampling" or – to be more precise – a sub-category called 'criterion sampling', that is, a conscious selection by the researcher of participants who met certain criteria to include in the study. (This is, incidentally, in contrast to the random sampling typical of quantitative studies that seek to be representative of a large population).

Looking for and including participants who share similar interests, inclinations and backgrounds allows for a richer description of the target population's lived experiences than a diverse sample could provide. Moustakas (1994) states that:

> "The essential criteria for locating and selecting the research participants include the following: the research participant must have experienced the phenomenon, is interested in understanding the phenomenon, is willing to participate in lengthy interviews, grants the researcher permission to tape record, possibly videotape the interview and publish the data in a dissertation and other publication" (p. 107).

This list of essentials certainly served as a minimum criterion for selecting the participants in my study. My everyday interaction with all of the eventually identified participants at that time was within the context of what Gray (2008) has termed "collegial conversations" and this assisted me when I asked them if they would be willing to engage in in-depth interviews regarding my research topic. It also helped to establish trusting, creative relationships during the research stage proper.

3.4.2.2 Sample size

Creswell (2007) recommends interviews with ten people as being sufficient for a phenomenological study although Patton (2002) points out that sample size in qualitative research depends not only on the particular design and purpose of a qualitative study, but on what information will be most useful, and what information will have the most credibility. Pickler (2007), moreover, stresses that the ultimate size of the sample is determined by the principle of saturation, which Polit and Beck (2004) determine as the point at which data-collection themes are repeated. In 2008, I

had allowed for the interview of more than the four additional academic staff participants that eventually were included. However, towards the end of the planned interviews, invitations to further participants were not followed through as I realised that the interview data had in fact become saturated enough to address my research questions.

3.4.2.3 Participants

As mentioned in chapter 1, I had originally undertaken a series of conversational interviews in 2005 with a population sample of senior managers (University and academic), academic managers, academics and academically related change agents.– who may or may not have occupied both roles – within the University and who were directly connected with decisions being made for the online learning area. The analysis of the data that emerged revealed a need to incorporate more academic staff voices and, in terms of relevance, the virtual learning environment itself had changed soon afterwards. When in 2008 I engaged in a fresh, enlarged round of interviews, those of the original cohort who were still in post at the University kindly agreed to re-engage. As part of this process, I showed each one of them their originally approved transcripts – and their perspectives on events prior to 2005 had not in each instance seemingly changed. I was keen, as I had earlier mentioned, to give more emphasis to the experiences of academic staff with regards the change management phenomenon so I then approached additional practitioners using the same criteria that Moustakas (1994) had set out and had been originally employed back then. I'm pleased to say that they all agreed to participate. Incidentally, of the four 2005 participants who had moved elsewhere, it only proved possible in the end to make contact with and obtain approval from three of these to use their original 2005 comments.

So, I had interviewed ten individuals in 2005. In 2008, six of these original participants who were still employed by the University were re-interviewed and their experiences brought-up-to date while 1 x academic middle manager, 4 x academic lecturing staff and 1 x academic related staff were interviewed for the first time. It

was also possible to evidence three of the 2005 comments from those no longer working for the University. The full list is shown in Appendix 5.

3.4.2.4 Ethical issues and interview procedures

Any proposed or actual research may lead to issues of concern in relation to ethics. When researching with human participants, particular attention is needed to ensure that subjects are not deceived or exploited, and that their dignity as a human being is not undermined, treating participants fairly without undue burdens being applied (Sim & Wright, 2000). These are the principles of justice and respect for autonomy and the person. Equally, research should aim to be of benefit and it should not harm either the participants or others. These are the principles of beneficence and nonmaleficence (Sim & Wright, 2000). To make certain that ethical principles are adhered to, institutions have policies and procedures for ethical approval of proposed research studies. I ensured that ethical principles were fully applied to the research undertaken, and I took pains to demonstrate this through the application of ethical principles and agreed processes of ethical approval. As such, the approaches adopted for this study were designed to fully comply with the ethical research policies both of the University of Strathclyde and Scotia University. In addition, cross-checking of proposed practices was made against the Ethical Guidelines of the Social Research Association (2003); the Economics and Social Research Council's (ESRC) Research Ethics Framework (2005); British Educational Research Association's Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2004); and the Scottish Educational Research Association's Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2005).

With regards to the University of Strathclyde, the matter of compliance was officially pursued through Mr. Iain Smith, my then thesis supervisor, and in the case of Scotia University, I sought and obtained permission from senior management through the then University Secretary (Dr. Jack Jones) to undertake research within its walls and, more specifically, permission to interview management, academic and academic related staff (Appendix 1).

An interview with individuals in this group was sought by way of a written request and, in an effort to offer informed consent, accompanied by a Research Information Sheet (see Appendix 2). Neuman (2005) has stated that it is not enough to just get permission from respondents, but that 'they need to know what they are being asked to participate in so that they can make an *informed* decision' (p. 96). The Research Information Sheet introduced the researcher and the study, explained why would-be participants had been selected, solicited their involvement, assured them that the two interviews planned would be conducted in strictest confidence (please see Appendix 2) and the lengths of time that they would each probably last for. (N.B. Where the interviews went over this time it was the participant's choice). Participants were also asked in the Participant Consent Form (Appendix 3) to give their permission for me to audio record the interview and their written consent to having their transcript included as part of the project, subject to being checked for accuracy by themselves.

The interviews were arranged at a time and place convenient to the participants, as it can be posited that I was better able to investigate the interpretations and meanings of the latter in their chosen settings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). These included participants' offices, seminar rooms in university schools and meeting rooms in the university library. All these locations enabled the interview to be conducted confidentially, in privacy and with sufficient quietness for audio-taping to take place. Two interviews were undertaken with each participant. The first one lasting approximately an hour was more in-depth where participants were asked to reveal, in their own words, their experiences of the phenomenon while the prime purpose of the second, which lasted approximately 30 minutes, was to establish validity by ascertaining whether the transcripts and the thematic themes were an adequate reflection of the participants' experience and represented reality. Lincoln and Guba (1985) call this activity 'member checks' (p. 314) whereby those who have lived the described experience validate that the reported findings represent their views. In addition to validating the transcripts, the second interview also enabled the participant to re-state events, remember further details and elaborate on particular issues. Here, according to van Manen (1990, p. 99) both the researcher and the interviewee weigh the appropriateness of each theme by asking: 'is this what the experience is really like?' In doing so, they 'self-reflectively orient themselves to the collective ground that

brings the significance of the phenomenological question into view' (van Manen 1990, p. 99).

Before each interview, the participant was asked to confirm that they had had the opportunity to read the Research Information Sheet and if not, time was allowed for this prior to the commencement of the interview. The participants were also given the option of viewing the structured element of the interview protocol before the start. Only three chose to do so.

In addition, I verbally stressed that their interests as participants in the study would be safeguarded; that complete confidentiality would be maintained and that any quotations that might be used would not be attributed by real name but by pseudonym. The name and location of the institution would also be so treated. Confidentiality protects participants in a study so that their individual identities cannot be linked to the information that they provide and will not be publicly divulged (Polit & Hungler, 1999). Both confidentiality and anonymity were also guaranteed by ensuring that the data obtained were used in such a way that no one other than the researcher knew the source (Behi & Nolan, 1995) and that, as a consequence the names of the informants could not be associated with particular points. Indeed, the original consent form, the audiotapes and transcriptions of the tapes and the personal record containing personal details of each participant and their pseudonym have been kept in a locked filing cabinet in the my study at home, accessible only to me. Further, at all stages, the researcher has endeavoured to model good practice in data handling, storage and processing in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act (1998).

The use of an audio recorder was necessary because of the need for accuracy during the data analysis, the researcher’s absence of ability in shorthand, the potential length of each interview (Creswell, 2004) and also because it enabled the researcher to keep good eye contact with the participant. Developing an atmosphere in this way that fosters trust and ease is of utmost importance.

The hardware that was used to record the interviews was chosen to be from both a physical and technical angle as unobtrusive as possible. It was a simple set-up with a slimline micro-cassette unit and a low profile microphone – so as to put participants at their ease and encourage them to open up more during their 'conversations'. Also, to minimize the possibility of a power failure and other embarrassing disruption, I always conducted the interviews with an extra set of batteries and a blank audio-cassette available.

Upon completion of the interview process, each participant was thanked face-to-face and within a day they were sent a handwritten note thanking them further for their time and contribution. An offer was also made to provide participants with an electronic copy of the completed research study, should they be interested. This served as an additional means of showing appreciation for their involvement.

3.4.2.5 Development and use of the interview protocol

Before the actual interviews were conducted, a provisional interview protocol had been drawn up to address the research questions and this was pilot tested on three colleagues of an equivalent category who were not involved in the research. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) refer to this work as "stretching exercises" (p. 4) and remark that this allows the researcher to practice interview, observation, writing, reflection, and artistic skills to refine their research instruments, which I can certainly confirm were very useful for me. I was very conscious that the quality of the data gathering and subsequent analysis was going to be dependent upon the skills and focussed intent I as the researcher brought to the interview process. Accordingly, a noted proficiency to conduct the interviews in the ways that they should be was of great importance and, frankly – as a novice researcher in a project of this nature and dimension – a significant challenge. I was the main data collection instrument in this phenomenological research (Kvale, 1996; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) conducting the interviews without the help of research assistants. I was not there as an impersonal data collector.

Incidentally, another practical benefit of the pilot stage is that it is able to feed back to the researcher questions about the structure of the protocol. In this instance, it highlighted that – in order to best address particular issues – separate protocols appropriate to the main types of participant (viz. senior manager/manager, academic, academic related) and their responsibilities were required.

Interviewing in any enquiry can be undertaken using a range of approaches, along what Nutbrown calls a "continuum of formality" (2003, p. 124). Participants in a Heideggerian study are though not seen as experimental "objects" but human subjects. The interviews are interpersonal engagements between equals in which the participants are encouraged to share the details of their information about the experiences, behaviours, knowledge, feelings and opinions (Polkinghorne, 1989; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The development of such rapport or 'co-creation' (Lowes & Prowse, 2001), with its power to relieve anxiety and reduce the distance between the researcher and participant can also be seen as an indication that the researcher appreciates each individual's particular situation and experiences. A strong trusting relationship is one significant way to meet and overcome problems associated with quality standards of qualitative data: "Prolonged engagement, is the investment of sufficient time to… learning the 'culture,' testing for misinformation and building trust" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301). The consequences, I felt, were that participants felt more able to give answers that (compared to structured interviews) they had more influence over, permitting them to talk about the things that were personally important (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), and providing richer data for the subsequent data analysis stage (May, 2001).

The finalised questions for each category of participant (see Appendix 4) therefore formed a starting point and guide to ensuring significant points were discussed with all those interviewed (Kvale, 1996). Use was made of what are known as *meaning questions* that ask for the meaning and significance of certain phenomena (van Manen, 1990) so that a fuller understanding of this can be gained. I needed to learn to be with the participants in a way that allowed for open conversation yet was guided towards gathering their descriptions; to fully participate in the interviews

(Patton, 2002) and, also as a consequence, to subsequently recognise and act upon crucial statements and indicators from the interviewees during the analysis stage. The nature of being-with is different to that of a collegial dialogue where stratagems and advice are given. Within a phenomenological interview, there are no judgements to be made, no appraisal or advice to help the academic see the situation in a different light. Indeed, I was very conscious of the need to avoid any situation where the interviewee was concerned 'about the right and wrong things to say' (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 102), giving answers which they thought I just wanted to hear. While I accordingly felt that it was most important that I did not lead the participants in the direction in which they expected the interview to go (Sociological Research Skills, n.d.), I was aware of that important requirement to keep the conversation on track while probing for greater detail as interviewees describe specific experiences (Kvale, 1996; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). In these respects, a singular piece of advice from the literature was to resonate constantly; "one needs to be oriented to one's question or notion in such a strong manner that one does not get easily carried away with interviews that go everywhere and nowhere" (van Manen, 1990, p. 67). It not only calls for some skill to generate and sequence those good quality initial questions but also in relation to supplementary guiding questions as well, to draw further insights from the participants. The aim was to "…explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject…to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined" (Patton, 2002, p. 343). Being-with in phenomenological conversation seeks to shine a light on the everydayness, the ordinary, the commonplace, the accepted and the assumed.

Apart from the initial broadly based question, the order in which I approached the subsequent interview topics was as a result generally flexible, adjusted according to the progression of the interview with each individual and the particular category of participant (viz. managers and change agents, academics or academic related). It allowed me a degree of freedom to follow up on these aspects (Kvale, 1996), to come back at certain issues unconstrained by a set of fixed questions (Bryman, 2008)

and/or to even follow an amended line of inquiry (Patton, 2002). The list of specific questions was therefore used as an aide memoire, "to remind the interviewer to ask about certain things" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 15) if they were not covered in the participants' immediate responses, especially when the latter had difficulty in answering a question or where the initial answer to a question was otherwise be inadequate. Further non-specific interventions were also used to keep the interview on track. No further intervention could cause confusion either because of the lack of understanding of the question by the participant or by the lack of understanding of the participant's answer by myself (Wimmer & Dominick, 2005). So, when for instance a participant provided only a brief response, I used prompts such as:

- Please explain what you mean by…?
- Can you please elaborate on what you meant by…?
- What do you feel was the most important part of your experience?
- How can we accomplish this?

Admittedly, available "flexibility in sequencing and wording questions can result in substantially different responses from different perspectives, [reduces] the comparability of responses" (Patton, 2002, p. 349). However, whilst remaining aware of the limitations in interviewing this way, which resulted in a less than systematic approach to questioning, I would again argue that gaining these different responses was far more important to the quality of data generation desired than providing directly comparable data derived from more standardised questioning. Indeed, the chosen approach to interviewing increases I feel the contextuality and comprehensiveness of the data obtained and contributes to the study's credibility and dependability. It allowed me to much more fully appreciate what stood out first, how the participants themselves perceived it, felt about it, remembered it, made sense of it, and talked about it. The direct face-to-face interview meetings with participants – as against say telephone interviews – were also crucial in that they allowed me get some added sense of participants' experiences conveyed through facial expressions, gestures, tones, pauses, silences and general impressions which I could note in my field notes (as illustrated in Appendix 6) and build into the interpretative analysis.

I decided to start the interviews with some informal chit-chat. It could be seen as surprising in some ways to begin in such a low key manner but my motive here was to gradually get round to asking the person to think about their lived experiences. In line with this, the first actual interview question was one, as can be seen, that was rather wide-ranging in nature and then there were a series of further questions to frame and enrich the interview conversation. As the person talked, I encouraged them to start to reflect more deeply into their experience and to remind themselves more about the experience. Polkinghorne (1989, p. 47) states that a type of question to avoid here is "What happened?" As a consequence, and in line with statements earlier, I was interested in the 'how' rather than the 'what'. The interview finally ended when the salient topics from the interview guide had been addressed and the participant indicated they had nothing further to say. By the end of their separate interviews, I felt that all the participants had been willing to share as much as they could and describe pretty much what they could think of.

3.4.3 REFLECTING ON THE ESSENTIAL THEMES THAT CHARACTERISE THE PHENOMENON

Themes are not considered to be merely objects or generalisations of a superficial analysis, but as van Manen (1990, p. 90) states, more likened, metaphorically speaking to "knots in the webs of our experience, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes." My role as researcher at this stage was to start to recover the essential themes – "seeing meaning" (van Manen, 1990, p. 79) – from within this data of the experience as lived – in other words, its *essence* or "…that which grounds the things of our experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 32). "…in determining the universal or essential quality of a theme, [the] concern is to discover aspects or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is" (van Manen, 1990, p. 107). The act of thematic analysis is more than a superficial reflection of the explicit meaning of the participant's descriptions. Through the identification of themes, we can attain a deeper, more comprehensive insight into the world of those who experienced the phenomenon. It encourages the researcher to weave together the anecdotes from

within each participant's data, reflect and make a distinction between their first-hand impression of these and the essence of the experience in question.

At the time of transcription, I could not know what might be important, so every word was considered relevant. I endeavoured to take great care when transcribing to ensure the integrity of the transcription, to help preserve the data for subsequent analysis, referencing and to cross-check information (Vockell & Asher, 1994). The first step that I followed here was to read carefully though each transcript without making any notes, to familiarise myself again with the descriptions of the lived experiences as originally told to me.

van Manen (1990, pp. 92-93) offers a number of approaches toward uncovering or isolating the thematic aspects of a phenomenon. In this study, I chose to employ the selective or highlighting approach to coding, whereby the text is read several times and words, phrases and anecdotes that seem particularly significant or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described are highlighted. I undertook this electronically using NVivo data analysis software. 179 significant elements were identified in this way. During further analysis, sub-themes were formed where relationships between these significant elements were identified. This, van Manen warned, is not a mechanical procedure, but rather a 'creative hermeneutic process' (1990, p. 96).

The researcher had to be very vigilant: Easton, McComish, and Greenberg (2000) emphasised the significance of the transcription process, and how errors "as simple as inaccurate punctuation or as serious as mistyped words [can] change the entire meaning of the sentence" (p. 706).

After completing this first round of analysing all of the interviews, I went back and further reviewed the full transcripts to identify if there were any sub-themes that were interconnected, redundant or incidental. Items included within redundant sub-themes that could be merged with others while incidental ones could be eliminated. Reading each description involved me in asking myself: "What does this sentence or

sentence cluster reveal about the phenomenon or experience being described?" (van Manen, 1990, p. 93). What common meaning does it portray?

3.4.3.1 Assistance offered by data analysis software

Organizing and analyzing the data can appear to be an impossible undertaking (Patton, 2002). However, dedicated computer software packages have over the last twenty years helped qualitative researchers to deal with the work that is normally produced. What is more, these tools are now much more accessible, purpose designed and with ever more sophisticated features. So even though the data still needs to be prepared and entered, the researcher is freed from some of the time-consuming clerical and data management jobs to focus more on the task of analysis itself, with the software greatly facilitating the organisation, storage, retrieval and interrogation of data that has been entered (Kelle, 1995; Kelle and Laurie, 1995; Seale, 2000; Gibbs, 2002; Patton, 2002; Richards, 2002). Lee and Esterhuizen (2000) found this aspect of the software gave researchers the ability to be more rigorous in their analysis, as it made careful checking easier. Indeed, it does not take away the need for the researcher to constantly read and re-read the material and reflect upon it (Gibbs, 2002). It is vital that researchers do not become either become immersed in coding, or undertake it mechanically. This is because they may lose sight of the larger picture – the overarching connections in the data (Gilbert, 2002) – and a true understanding of why they are coding a piece of text here in the first place.

A number of software packages are available for researchers through Strathclyde University's licensing arrangements and, of these, NVivo was selected for this project because it is a code based theory building program that excels exceptionally as a data organising tool (Smith & Hesse-Biber, 1996) assisting with the identification of themes and the relationship between themes. With the ability of the software to read rich text files, interviews transcribed and saved in this format can then be easily imported with a rapid start being made on their coding.

3.4.4 REFLECTING (THROUGH WRITING) ON THE VITAL THEMES THAT ARE FEATURES OF THE PHENOMENON

Writing began in this study as the means of bringing together the participants' coded transcripts as the way to relate their experiences and I tried to grasp additional meanings from these extracts by further writing and rewriting. I found myself going back and forth between the data and my emerging interpretation in hermeneutic cycles, attempting to put the experience onto paper, pursuing ongoing reflection, rereading, adding to and transferring notes from my field notes, focusing on words and unfolding meaning, and striving to express thoughts in as clear and precise a manner as possible. All of this formed another way of understanding the structure of the phenomenon: "to write is to measure our thoughtfulness" (van Manen 1990, p. 127). As data analysis occurs concurrently with data collection, writing (and rewriting) form an integral part of the research process from the start. Indeed, research and theorising, posits van Manen, "cannot be separated from the textual practice of writing" (1990, p. ix). In the writing process, the phenomenological approach seeks to reconstruct the experience in such a way that the reader is able to recognise this experience as a "possible interpretation of that experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 41). I discovered that, as I began to write, there was no great schema on which I could draw upon to assist me in the process. Within the latter, it was my role, as an interpretive enquirer, to ensure that writings on the interpretation of the participants' experience offered an adequate representation of their voices. Yet, because experiences of the life-world are typically unself-conscious and pre-reflective, it is invariably a struggle to uncover the layers of meaning that describe these experiences, to 'let us see that which shines through and that which tends to hide itself' (van Manen, 1990, p. 130). So, my writing became a crafting language in order, as van Manen explains, "the structure of the lived experience is revealed to us in such a fashion that we are now able to grasp the nature and significance of this experience in a hitherto unseen way." (p. 39). Sometimes, in fact, the deep truth of the lived experience seems to lie just beyond expressed words, on the very other side of language, in silence (van Manen, 1990).

Through such pondering, reflecting and dialoguing with the text, I felt that I obtained a deeper understanding of the phenomenological research process and of the lived experiences. Within the written language, I have tried to link participants' texts into a comprehensive unified whole, which Polkinghorne (1989, p. 19) refers to as 'a principle of best fit'. Best fit, comes after the researcher has moved back and forth through the data, carefully considering various possible interpretations and forming a way of providing an explanation for the phenomena under scrutiny.

3.4.5 ENSURE THAT THERE IS A STRONG AND ORIENTED RELATION TO THE PHENOMENON

Hermeneutic Phenomenology aims to produce texts that are oriented, strong, rich and deep (van Manen, 1990). It was necessary to work creatively to accurately present the voices of participants and their interpretation of the phenomenon. My desire was to produce texts, which should not present an artificial separation of 'theory' versus 'life', but present textual themes in concert with the notion of the phenomenon. I wanted to avoid being sidetracked, resorting to schemes of classification or preconceived notions. It is during this stage of the method that complete themes begin to materialize. I was making a concerted effort to reflect critically on the choices I was starting to make by repeatedly holding the identified theme against the overall context of the lived experiences being told and letting my personal experiences of these matters in this context interpret, be "open" as much as possible:

> "Openness — in the sense of interpretive ability — is a sustaining motive of all qualitative inquiry. Such inquiry is based on the idea that no interpretation is ever complete, no explication of meaning is ever final, no insight is beyond challenge" (van Manen, 2002, p. 237).

According to van Manen, being oriented means that we do not separate theory from lived experience, but rather that "we are researchers oriented to the world" (1990, p. 151). An important philosophical point of difference between Husserl and the work of Heidegger and van Manen concerns this relationship between lived experience and text. As mentioned previously, Husserl believed that the true essence of lived experience is found when experience is 'bracketed off' from its text or context surrounding it. Although each presented their unique philosophical arguments,

Heidegger and van Manen both believe that text, such as that derived from language and history, is intertwined in a deep relationship with experience. It is a key to help illuminate it, and should not therefore be separated off. “If we simply try to forget or ignore what we already “know”, we might find that the presupposition persistently creeps back into our reflections” (van Manen, 1990, p. 47).

Throughout the research process I have strived to uphold a firm orientation to the research questions. Indeed, in the very early stages, I unfortunately found myself wanting to explain – in the spirit of Husserl – the ‘how’ rather than let the data speak of the experience. As time went on, this tendency however settled and through returning again and again to the audio recordings and the written data I was able to retrieve, regain and recapture the phenomenon by trying to answer the ongoing question, what is the meaning in what I am hearing or reading? (van Manen, 1990). In this respect I tried to always remain aware of the possibility of making an inaccurate or contaminated interpretation. I needed also to remain open and alert to values that differed from my own, as it is in this space between own and other that new insights will emerge.

3.4.6 BALANCING THE RESEARCH CONTEXT BY CONSIDERING PARTS AND WHOLE

Bogdan and Biklen (1998, p. 157) characterize data analysis as "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned and deciding what you will tell others". The concept of Heideggerian hermeneutic circles of understanding underlined the process here. It is also at the core of van Manen’s framework as well. The aim was to try and understand or construct an appreciation of the participants’ lived experiences – their impressions, the relationships and connections I made – while collecting data. Within such a circle, my thoughts continuously flowed back and forth between the words of an individual participant, the whole and the parts, and what I remembered other participants had said in an attempt to disclose phenomena where ‘the parts’ reflected ‘the whole’. So an

understanding of the whole comes from the parts, and vice versa. Thus this process of reading and re-reading allowed different aspects of the phenomenon to further reveal themselves.

Upon completion of all these measures, I then stepped back once more to undertake an even deeper level of re-analysis and re-interpretation – what Merleau-Ponty calls a "hyper-reflection" (1969, p. 38). By further reinterpreting the content that was grouped within the themes, revisiting yet again my notes and looking for linkages or commonalities, it became possible to establish a much more limited number of "essential themes" which explicate the phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). A compelling authentic and meaningful statement, presented in a narrative form, hopefully materializes. No one meaning stays static or fixed during this process and as attempts are made to uncover the experience. By weaving between the data and the emerging meanings each new meaning is layered with previous understandings with forward movement to new understandings. In such a way, the van Manen's framework brought me back to the phenomenon, which was the starting point for the research.

3.5 STRENGTHS OF THE FRAMEWORK FOR THIS STUDY

When conducting phenomenological research it is important not to be intensely focused on method at the expense of phenomena. However, van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic analytical framework did offer me a very welcome approach to carrying out this hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry. In general, it sets out a clear course to follow, encompassing both leading strands of the philosophy of phenomenology, with the interplay of research activities described underscoring I felt vital elements of phenomenological writing, reflective practice and phenomenological meaning.

Particular advantages of the framework for me in this study were that it:

1. Allows and indeed calls for the use of multiple sources of material to be gathered for analysis. The most important source naturally emanates from the participants themselves. In addition, my pre-existing background interest, awareness and

understanding of change management generally and within post-compulsory educational settings had led me to identify literature sources that have been incorporated into this study. Then, there have been the other literature sources uncovered during the course of the study. Finally, the study has incorporates and acknowledges my own views, experiences and assumptions (that were highlighted in section 3.4.1).

2. Lends added emphasis to the "conversational" type of interviews. As I earlier remarked within section 3.4.2.5, this form of interview can build rapport and trust and can therefore is likely to produce more text that is meaningful for what it was – as a lived experience. Conversational interviews were, as a consequence, justifiably decided upon within this study for the deeper understanding that they were likely to and did, I feel, provide.

3. It is very much a writing based research activity that places a heavy emphasis on the inventiveness of the researcher and the creative interpretation of the texts. As I reflected in section 3.4.4, writing allowed me to craft or interpret the participants' reflections on their experiences so that meaning could be uncovered and a picture adequately representing their views could emerge.

It would have been difficult for me to know where to start, how to actually go about gathering the material, analysing it, and writing about the essence of online learning change management at Scotia University without having such an inclusive and clear approach to be guided by in my work.

3.6 ADDITIONAL QUALITY STANDARDS

Murphy and Yieldeer (2009) comment that:

> "The issue of quality has troubled qualitative researchers for over a quarter of a century with no hint of a consensus on quality criteria, or even on the appropriateness of trying to establish a common set of criteria" (p.2).

The issues being tackled within a qualitative investigation are very different in terms of both epistemology and ontology. (Rolfe, 2006).

van Manen (1997) advocates that “resonance” should be a key criteria by which readers should evaluate a hermeneutic study. A resonant text is one that inspires understanding of our everyday realities. The power of interpretive phenomenological texts, writes van Manen, lies in the "resonance that the word can effect" (1997, p. 345). Finlay (2009) however observes that in indicating quality aspects in phenomenological studies particular readers’ expectations as to standards do need to be acknowledged:

> “Researchers need to attend to the audience they are attempting to communicate with. I value research which has both rigor [*sic*] and resonance. I favour reporting research in whatever mode is going to have the most relevance and impact. Broader political, instrumental, or strategic interests cannot be ignored and it behoves phenomenologists to be reflexively aware of the issues at stake when they are presenting” (p. 14).

3.6.1 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Rolfe (2006) though believes that ‘rigour’ is too much of a positivist term, leaning towards the revelation of certainties absent within qualitative research. He instead suggests that standards should be linked to the “most widely used approach” (Polit & Beck, 2004, p. 444) for qualitative studies, that of ‘trustworthiness’ first identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 290-327). Its adoption reinforces the view of Finlay (2009) in the quotation featured above, that the reader/consumer rather than the producer should assume a responsibility for making judgements about quality: “A study is trustworthy if and only if the reader of the research report judges it to be so” (Rolfe, 2006, p. 305). Guba and Lincoln later added (1989, p. 245) a further concept of “authenticity”, a constructivist paradigm, to underscore the importance mentioned by Finlay (2009) for any qualitative research study to allow its readers the opportunity to build a clear and greater level of knowledge and understanding. To offer a further means of ensuring such methodological quality alongside van Manen’s framework, I have therefore sought to apply Lincoln and Guba’s concepts of “trustworthiness” and “authenticity”.

These parallel criteria for rigour under trustworthiness are credibility (internal validity), dependability (reliability), confirmability (objectivity) and transferability (external validity); while authenticity in this instance encompasses the application of ontological and educative authenticities.

3.6.1.1 Credibility

Credibility hinges on establishing believability of the data; and four approaches were adopted:

a) 'Prolonged engagement' marks staying in the field until saturation occurs. Such a feature was reflected in the sample size that I eventually arrived at (and as was mentioned in this chapter, section 3.4.2.2). Prolonged engagement also refers to the rapport and trust that needs to be formed – the 'being-with' – and this was encouraged through the interviews for this being conversational in format (section 3.4.2.5).

b) 'Data triangulation' was employed. An extended literature review was carried out in Chapter 2 pertinent to the research questions and then, as shall be seen, this will set against the thematic findings in order to ensure that the final account is rich and well-developed, and providing a safeguard against any unnoticed researcher bias and/or distortions that might occur from an incomplete range of reported experiences. A further example is the reflexive entries that were made in my field notes (section 3.4.2.5).

c) 'Peer debriefing' exposes a researcher to the searching questions of others who are experienced in the methods of enquiry, the phenomenon or both (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polit & Hungler, 1999). Lincoln and Guba (1985) define peer debriefing as:

> "a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind." (p. 308)

In this study, I exposed the ongoing research work at periodic intervals to a colleague for constructive criticism.

d) 'Participant validation' – or "member checking" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314) – was employed when I sought the opinions of each of the 2008 participants to see if the essential themes, themes and sub-themes subsequently identified were true to their individual experiences and, where used in the next chapter, their applicable quotations.

3.6.1.2 Confirmability and Dependability

Confirmability can be achieved by ensuring that data (i.e. constructions, contentions and facts) can be linked back to their original sources, the degree to which they are corroborated and the extent to which they have been affected by any bias or distortion. Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, and Spiers (2002) contend that confirmability, concerned as it is with endorsing evidence that would allow another researcher to see if they could arrive at similar findings, was a concept that was not pertinent to phenomenology. However studies such as Lauver's (2009) show that confirmability could be applicable (if only on a case-by-case basis). In this respect, and as will be seen, it is in the same position as the concept of "transferability".

Through *Dependability*, the reader can evaluate how well the various stages of the study, including the analytical techniques that were used, were pursued; whether the approach that was adopted (i.e. a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology) was applicable to the investigation; and whether the tactic was applied in a consistent manner (in terms of isolating the thematic experiences in chapter 4 of this study). Both Confirmability and Dependability are dependent on an adequate audit trail being kept and Guba and Lincoln (1989) point out the audit trail for confirmability and that for dependability would normally be carried out at the same time.

The audit trail would also very much encompass insights reached through the use of the field notes referred to earlier. Early on, the latter proved useful making obvious to me the existing values and beliefs that I held as I entered into the research (section 3.4.1). During the interview stage (section 3.4.2.5) I would record I also made notes about the participant – including tone of voice, delivery, body language and general impressions. Whilst listening to the transcripts of the interviews, I would enter more

comments in these notes. I was in addition able to notice my personal assumptions and biases by observing how my questions might have led the conversations in particular directions and if a participant revealed information that made me question a belief I held. For instance, this happened in terms of my conviction that full consultation should always occur during a change management process. In this way, my assumptions that led to this research were exposed to what the research revealed.

Within the dynamics of the hermeneutic circle (this chapter, 3.2.4 – 3.2.6) my field notes became a more extended data tool, allowing me to remain close to and hermeneutically open in my enquiries as they evolved. Extracts are shown in Appendix 6. My notes became more part of a "decision trail" (Koch, 1994), identifying steps taken in the data collection process, decisions that I made, the rationale behind such decisions, and reflections on the data gathering and interpretive process. van Manen says that 'much of real writing occurs in this way' (1990, p. 114).

3.6.1.3 Transferability

Transferability concerns whether the findings can be transferred to another setting or group. This is a matter that is seen as a serious challenge for phenomenological studies and qualitative research in general (Manning, 1992; Maggs-Rapport, 2001; Szarycz, 2009). Where then is the value in asking a subjective question – one that cannot be generalized? One crucial implication of the hermeneutic circle, for instance, is that as every individual makes interpretations based on their own perspective, so all interpretations will naturally be unique. In other words, subjectivity is valued; there is acknowledgement that humans are incapable of total objectivity because they are situated in a reality constructed by subjective experiences. While researchers in Husserlian phenomenology (having discovered the essence of an experience) make claims which are to be regarded as absolute and universally true, hermeneutic researchers are aware that their studies' claims (which arise from the meaning others make of objects or experiences) can never be true for more than a given situation: what is useful, relevant, and meaningful depends on this. "A phenomenological description is always one interpretation" (van Manen, 1990, p. 31).

However, referring to a lecture by Buytendijk, van Manen (1990, p. 27) also describes how the former referred to the concept of the "phenomenological nod", a silent acknowledgement of an episode that others have had or could have had:

> "The ultimate goal of phenomenological research…is to take these critical discoveries and return them to the lifeworld in which we live in order to increase understanding of human communication." (Orbe, 2000, p. 617)

Such is hopefully the value of the study here. Transferability would be possible but it would only be applicable on a case-by-case basis where another researcher saw merit in making a transfer to their context of interest:

> The reader has to be able to make a decision about the similarity of the study findings to the decision to which the reader is considering applying the findings" (Clissett, 2008, p. 104).

3.6.2 AUTHENTICITY

"Ontological authenticity" is achieved through the use of multiple sources of data collection (the participants' transcribed views, the field notes and the literature review) so that the reader's "constructions are improved, matured, expanded, and elaborated, in that they now possess more information and have become more sophisticated in its use" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 248)

The ability to help the reader appreciate the viewpoints and constructions of others is another hallmark of authenticity – in this case "educative authenticity" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 248). This was achieved in my study through the use of rich description and, where possible, the use of participants' words to allow them to speak for themselves.

Lincoln and Guba wrote that both of these authenticities

> ''were designated as criteria determining a raised level of awareness, in the first instance, by individual research participants and, in the second, by individuals about those who surround them or with whom they come into contact for some social or organizational purpose'' (2005, p. 207).

3.7 SUMMARY

Even before the research methodology is identified consideration needs to be given to the challenge likely to be faced by a researcher in undertaking of conducting their investigation within an institution and an area of work with which they are strongly associated. Whilst, in my case, I hopefully possessed a certain credibility through my role as an academic developer in the eyes of the interviewees and could therefore achieve a closer rapport, I needed to consciously avoid exploiting that relationship in any way and lead them in their answers, and try to maintain a detached, reflective, neutral position as a researcher. There was also a problem in that participants, particularly in management positions, might not be completely frank with me partly because I was based outside of their unit and, despite assurances to the contrary, to feel that it would be easy for management further up the scale when reading the completed study to link perhaps critical views to the person who first uttered them.

The chapter next went on to indicate how the particular research methodology was determined upon. Qualitative research is concerned with underlying processes and acquiring a deeper understanding of social phenomena and as such is relevant to the intent of the study. With the particular focus on the way participants experienced certain “lifeworld” changes I adopted to use a phenomenological approach as the specific research methodology, concerned as it is with researching the experience of the events from the participants’ viewpoint. It allowed a much more trustworthy view of the human world being investigated to be obtained because feelings, perceptions and intuitions are acknowledged and analysed.

The two towering influences on phenomenological research are Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Husserl believed that consciousness provided the link to the real world. So, ultimate understanding of an experience, a phenomenon, in the real world was through a consciousness directed at it. In order for this to be achieved and its “essence” to be revealed prior knowledge, assumptions and expectations had to be suspended in order that the exercise could effectively proceed completely free of any bias.

The other influential phenomenologist, Martin Heidegger felt that because individuals are already in-the-world consciousness of a phenomenon is not central to the human situation. We should therefore study how we live in-the-world and hermeneutically interpret and reinterpret the direct experiences of the various phenomena that we come into contact; and, because we live in the real world, there is no need for the researcher suspend or bracket their previous understanding and prejudices. At the heart of the philosophy is an ongoing hermeneutic or interpretative cycle with analysis revolving around the whole experience, its constituent parts and the researcher's prior understandings leading to the generation of a meaning and set of relationships which are then re-evaluated which could in turn generate more meaning and relationships, and so on and so on.

The phenomenological approach adopted to carry out the data analysis for this study was a hermeneutic one because I wished to investigate lived experiences within context of the participants and myself and van Manen's framework was selected as the most suitable tool to pursue this task, holding particular advantages thanks to the liberty it gave to the use of various information sources and personal presumptions/preconceptions on the part of the researcher, the emphasis on the incorporation of participants' words and semiotics, and the degree it offered in terms of the accessibility of this content and by way of the approach itself.

The starting activity for the use of the framework is selecting a topic for investigation that holds particular relevance for the researcher. However, because of this personal involvement any findings could not free of personal values and feelings. Explicit disclosure of such prejudices was therefore seen as necessary here.

The second activity was to investigate experience as it was lived rather than being conceptualised. Rich data could be most usefully generated by interviewing participants to reflect on their experiences of the phenomenon. The individuals chosen should be on the basis of purposeful sampling and of a number to allow saturation of data-collection themes. The interview processes were conducted in line

with the ethical research policies of the institutions concerned. A non-directive conversational style of interviewing was adopted in order to allow a rapport to develop and enhance the picture of the phenomena emerging from the retelling of participants' experiences.

The third activity was reached when I started to reflect upon the interview transcripts in order to start to try and identify emerging sub-themes. I used a selective approach, reading through the transcripts a number of times and highlighting where I could see increasingly important inter-relationships and sub-themes starting to develop.

The fourth activity saw me beginning to write and constantly reflect upon the transcripts, emerging sub-themes and again recording this process as a decision trail in my field notes. I went back and forth between these in order to try and uncover the layers of meaning behind the texts in order to develop a best possible truth or explanation of what had been felt.

The fifth activity saw me revisit the sub-themes that I had identified to see if on reflection that larger, inclusive groups could be further identified. So, it was during this stage that complete themes began to materialize. Reflecting critically on the choices I was starting to make, I took into account the actual context of the phenomenon and my own "in this world" experiences.

The sixth and final activity saw me undertake an even-deeper reflective process to underscore my understanding of the phenomenon, the parts and the whole. Through such reflection on meanings and possible new meanings essential themes have hopefully been identified that go to reveal the meaning of the phenomenon.

I proceed in the next chapter to identify the essential themes and sub-themes illustrated through participants' experiences of the phenomenon.

4. THEMED SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 PARTICIPANTS

The full list of individuals eventually interviewed for the 2008 study – shown under their pseudonyms (and their then responsibilities within the University at the time of their interview) – are to be found in appendix 5. There was no attempt to control for variables such as participants' ethnicity, age, gender and so on in order to "ensure some degree of representation" (Crotty, 1996, p. 172). After all, that which is being represented is, as Crotty emphasises, the everyday, the ordinary experience and a phenomenon that intersects that experience. Isolating such a factor as an individual's age for reporting was unlikely to contribute any substantial understanding to this particular research.

The key factor was in identifying potential participants who would be able to articulate, fully and sensitively the phenomenon under investigation (Polkinghorne, 1989; Crotty, 1996) in order to "…obtain richly varied descriptions, not to achieve statistical generalisation" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 48). Taking selection a step further, Spradley (1979) qualifies participant selection by suggesting that "Although almost anyone can become an informant, not everyone makes a good informant" (p. 45). Gilchrist and Williams (1999) added that the "…informant needs to be thoroughly enculturated and currently active within his or her own culture in order to represent accurately that culture to the researcher" (p. 359). This is what I sought from those who were participants in this study.

Incidentally, in order for the reader to obtain a better idea of the perspective of the views that follow I have set a designation against the name of the contributor:

VP	=	Vice Principal
HoS	=	Head of School
Ac/SL	=	Academic Senior Lecturing Staff
Ac	=	Academic Lecturing Staff
eL/Mgr	=	Central eLearning Managers
eLT	=	School eLearning Technologist

4.1.2 ESSENTIAL THEMES

Any phenomenon is multi-layered and consists of multiple realities (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007) felt by the individuals who have experienced it. However, through the application of van Manen's human science framework of analysis (1990) and in particular hermeneutic cycles of understanding I progressed from the identification of significant statements, examining their relationship, bringing them into codes, unfolding their meanings, revisiting the statements, my notes and emerging with sub-themes, continuing my reflective analysis and understanding to establish themes, and then to try and determine essential themes that would offer up a perfect fit of the lived experiences of my participants.

For example, the codes of "University hierarchy" and "Necessary control" were both labelled under the sub-theme of "Change imposed from above". Building on a cyclical pattern of reflective analysis, I could see a relationship between the latter sub-theme and 'Little consultation before initiative started'. These could, I felt, both be brought together under a theme of 'Dialogue' and, on further consideration, combined under an essential theme of 'Planning and Leadership'.

The data analysis stage yielded 174 significant elements and then following upon successive hermeneutic cycles of analysis I finally ended up with 19 sub-themes, 6 themes and then 3 essential themes:

1. PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP FOR CHANGE

I. POLICIES
   - i) Scarcity of vision
   - ii) Continuing eLearning strategy and guidelines lacking
   - iii) Costing model not developed

II. DIALOGUE
   - iv) Cyber Study – little consultation
   - v) Improved consultation with Uni Moodle

2. SYSTEMS OPERATIONS FOR CHANGE

III. CYBER STUDY VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
   - vi) Publicly embarrassing
   - vii) Hampered online learning

viii) Unimaginatively used

IV. UNI MOODLE VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

ix) Versatile and likeable

x) Sound utilisation still varies

3. PREPARING ACADEMIC STAFF FOR CHANGE

V. BUILDING ONLINE COMPETENCIES

xi) Attitudes to online teaching – academic concerns

xii) Induction into online teaching – emphasis on technology

xiii) Other pressures on time restricts access to continuing professional development

xiv) Make continuing professional development more accessible

VI. PROVIDING NEW ROLES FOR CHANGE

xv) Value of networking and communities of practice

xvi) Support from the centre not held in high regard

xvii) Support from eLearning Technologists highly praised

xviii) Support from the centre is improving

xix) Learning Advancement Consultants – muddled implementation

4.2 PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP FOR CHANGE

4.2.1 POLICIES

4.2.1.1 Scarcity of vision

The main change agent and initiator of the online learning initiative had been Morgan, who was a member of the University's Senior Management Team. He indicated to me in 2005 that the reason for the introduction of online learning into the University's provision had been as a means to increase post-graduate numbers in an institution that was relatively physically remote from populated conglomerations. At the start there may not have been either a strategy or a vision:

> It was just "not clear that there was a vision, merely a view that evolved from [Morgan] that this is the future and where we should be." Suzanne (SL) admitted with some sadness in her voice. "I personally couldn't see a vision. I was unnerved by that." (2005)

She couldn't suppress her disbelief:

> "We actually created the platform before we did extensive market research. I remember talking to others in my School about this and we couldn't work it out. But then, the case wasn't fully explained. [pause] It just appeared to myself and others that we had the resource so we now needed to make sure we had courses on CS [Cyber Study] because we had the facilities to do it." (2005)

Thomas (eLM) also reflected on his astonishment at the time when he saw how the Senior Management Group guided by Morgan had examined the initiative:

> "It now really amazes me that they hadn't really researched the market. All they did was to set some fantastic goal that was never realized. The fact that the University had invested so much in the development of [Cyber Study] and had the infrastructure in place was the key motivating factor... It was very much because the infrastructure was there. Here you had otherwise experienced administrators heading up a relatively large organisation and it's very puzzling why they didn't think these things through in a more thorough-going manner." (2005)

Dirk (HoS) too believed that the cart drove the horse or, in other words, the existence of the Virtual Learning Environment – Cyber Study – to a significant extent drove the vision:

> "It was clear to me in a quite depressing way, as an educationalist, that the fact that the University had invested so much on the development of [Cyber Study] and had the infrastructure in place was the key motivating factor." (2008)

Simon (eLM) admitted also feeling uneasy, thinking that the vision was rather vague and certainly couldn't be called a strategy (2005); and Harry (HoS) felt that the vision was "possibly not explicitly clear" (2005).

Exasperated, Gwen (HoS) considered that the early emphasis on achieving a certain number of students online, was quite "clumsy" (2005). It also begged certain questions (what type of student – undergraduate, full-time, part-time, postgraduate?) and was in her mind anyway was less important than achieving a certain quality of experience. In the end, the target figures for online learners to be achieved within 5 years – 4,000 students – was nowhere met and even by 2007 the total number of students studying online was only 1,744. As Morgan (VP) admitted to me:

> "We didn't really get that major breakthrough that we anticipated in terms of numbers. We thought that we should have a kind of emergency response strategy ready because what would happen if one September we get 3,000 more students - how would we support it all? - so we were ready for that. We had thought it through but it didn't happen..." (2005)

4.2.1.2 Continuing eLearning strategy and guidelines lacking

It took three years after Cyber Study was initiated before an "eLearning Strategy for SU" finally appeared (Scotia University, 2002). However, even then, I found that the statements made within it dishearteningly spoke in generalities and avoided a real semblance of a strategy (viz. establishing priorities, deadlines, action steps, performance indicators and lacking coherence in so far as it failed to established linkages on both theoretical and practical levels to the University's wider Teaching and Learning strategy). It was, I felt, of a little help for actual guidance then and – as no further eLearning strategies have ever been published – some disappointment was expressed by participants that more direction and guidance has not been given.

Indeed, at the time that Uni Moodle was introduced in 2008, Dirk (HoS) had been expecting a well informed steer to assist him but found that the thinking still being deployed at the centre was "woolly". Lucy (L) considered that the lack of a coherent strategy was obviously less than helpful both to the institution and its staff. It was frustrating and odd in fact:

> "To be at the cutting edge of [online learning] you need to have a vision and strategy to take that forward. I was completely amazed! There are bits here and there but there's no 'This is how we don't do it, this is how we did it take it forward and this is where we want to get to.' Other universities I can go to their websites and just get straight into it and access it." (2008)

Simon (eLM) also felt that it would be great to have some specific guidelines for online learning so that Schools could develop courseware and support these to a clearly defined standard. Otherwise, the overall University brand image might be harmed. He went on:

> "There's were some rather broad statements on the topic of online learning and how it will extend the University's provision but, if you want my opinion, I was really disappointed These fell short of what I could see as a great need [on behalf of academic staff] to have a more detailed policy on the future that can encourage the design and delivery of good quality products." (2008)

Suzanne (SL) views echoed these remarks expressing strong concern that something more specific was needed if real change was to happen amongst less concerned

colleagues:

> "…unless the objectives are aligned School-wise then it's unlikely we're going to get things changing much on an individual level because people are not being tasked to make these improvements… Discouraging really…." (2008)

Rebecca (L) too found that policies were rather bewildering. They needed clarification both institutionally and at lower levels as well as being kept up to date:

> "Of course, [eLearning] is evolving so it would be useful if there was some kind of policy or mission directed towards it. Of course, we've got this 'Clear Way Ahead' document[7] now but I can't recall where [eLearning exactly] appears in the 'Clear Way Ahead' strategy and how that is going to be articulated to the school level. So I think it would benefit from something and given the speed of the technology it probably needs to be updated on a regular basis." (2008)

Leadership and a sense of direction were not being given. Ashley meanwhile considered that any changes that had been introduced of late were to an extent reactive to previous policies in other areas. He got the feeling that senior University management was still largely looking back over their shoulders rather than focussing on the way ahead for eLearning generally. Like Suzanne (SL), he expressed concern that the University was losing its sense of direction in this regard:

> "At present, that 'beacon' is not obvious. What they should be saying is "here's our strategy and this is therefore what we are going to do." (2008)

Simon (eLM) was of a similar opinion when he further commented that:

> "I think when eLearning was like new and exciting within the University there was a this drive for it but I would feel that it has [since] gone to the wayside within the University." (2008)

Juliette (SL) too admitted to being confused about the future. Following the move of the University's virtual learning environment to Uni Moodle, the vision was still unclear and she felt the need for more precise guidance on what University wanted to do in particular with its new online platform. Speaking slowly she said:

> "…does it want to develop it, should it be a more central point of providing student services, to do things like create social areas for students….a student

[7] (Scotia University, 2007)

portal?" (2008)

She went on to reflect that perhaps a specific eLearning strategy (incorporating online learning) wasn't ultimately that important. However, in absence, what was needed at the very least, for the peace of everyone's mind, was a statement of how eLearning in general can help support the University's wider strategy. As has been noted earlier, none of the later University wide strategies specifically help here.

In 2005, when I interviewed Morgan (VP) he said determinedly that "It's probably time to stop talking about eLearning. It's such an integral part of what we do now…". The official statements referred to in Chapter 1 in the early years of Cyber Study also proclaimed how integral technology enhanced learning was to the future of the University. However, I wondered if a little later on the University's involvement in the Research Assessment exercise (RAE) had a negative effect here. Although matters have improved relatively since then, Scotia University did not in the early years of the new century have a generally deep and wide research profile. Indeed, it seemed to pride itself on its teaching and graduate employment success rate alone. However the RAE – the peer review exercise that sets out to evaluate the quality of research in UK higher education institutions and which in turn influences the allocation of a very significant amount of funding – appeared to have faced University senior management with something of a dilemma. The contentment with a largely teaching and learning profile appeared to lessen and instead preparation for the RAE increasingly seemed to preoccupy University thinking, promoting practitioners' involvement with and career advancement through involvement with research at the expense of a greater commitment to teaching whether off- or on-line. Suzanne (SL) offered confirmation when she unhappily reflected that RAE had come:

> "…to dominate thinking in Schools in way that is not entirely helpful because staff don't regard teaching as a key activity. The rules of the game seem to me to be if you want personal advancement or brownie points for the School it is RAE publications that count and not spending time developing new methods of teaching and new methods of assessing." (2005)

Talking to me in 2005, Harry (HoS) believed that a strong concern for teaching and

learning very much needed to remain, whereas a major leap in our research profile was on the other hand going to be a challenge. He sadly agreed that the wrong signals may have been sent out:

> "The shift towards the 'Heading for 2010' strategy[8] and the perception that research was the most important thing has actually probably been potentially damaging to us because people might have felt doing development, teaching and learning what's the point of that? It is definitely a concern I have. [pause]. It is certainly something I'm very conscious of. As far as the University's vision and mission is concerned, I believe that it is realistic for us to strive for excellence in teaching and learning. I don't believe we will achieve it in research simply because we're starting from so far back in the pack…. I'm also conscious, being a largely undergraduate University, many of the staff have come in to be effectively teaching staff and I think that should be a quite legitimate role and not seen to be an inferior role because they are either not able or their aspirations are not to do research." (2005)

By 2008, Dirk (HoS) had concluded with sorrow that online learning was "drifting badly." It was a perception, I noted, that again found strong support from Suzanne (SL) this time in her own 2008 interview:

> "There's a belief from staff that distance learning generally and online learning in particular has become lost and is not regarded as a core activity for example in the timetable. We've now got agreement that the hours of tutoring will go on a timetable on a Saturday morning which upsets some staff. Why isn't it timetabled into the normal working week? This is the kind of issue they come up with. Also a lot of our distance learning programmes do not fall into the normal semester pattern and people have to work outside of normal semesters; and anything that comes outside of normal working semesters tends not to be collected so well in terms of their workload." (2008)

4.2.1.3 Costing model not developed

Ashley (L) remembered how he had been worried by:

> "The fact that [Cyber Study] was essentially a custom piece of software that we were at the time maintaining ourselves was not a good long-term solution I remember thinking at the time, 'I wonder if in terms of cost effectiveness we're going to have the technical staffing to be able to cope with this? I don't feel that I was proved wrong!" (2008)

[8] (Scotia University, 2003)

One of the enduring problems, Thomas (eLM) believed in 2005, was that not enough account was made of the sheer economics of moving into this sphere. In fact, even to this day, there never have been costing guidelines produced centrally for either eLearning in general or online learning in particular. The initial development was on the back of European Social Funding, the University could get away with "ball park" figures and so it has remained.

The comments made on this matter by participants in the interviews confirmed to me that in the absence of guidance alternative ideas concerning the time and resources it took to develop eLearning enhanced courses and about how to calculate how much funding to ask for were lacking. I noted down that Donna (D) displayed obvious disappointment when, on being interviewed, she ventured that:

> "Some evidence based work would be really valuable [here] so people could, when they're embarking on this … know the resource implications of what is being taken on – and therefore, if you're a Head of School or a course leader or whatever, you're making the business case you know if you are going to deliver this PgCert, short course or whatever, it'll have x number of modules, it will have this kind of contact, will require this kind of development, how much that's likely to cost in man hours and all the other bits and pieces and to actually deliver it…. [and] how many students do we actually need to make that financially viable? I just don't think we have devised a system where we know exactly how much time it takes for staff to develop a module for online learning." (2005)

Three years on, Dirk (HoS) was also (it seemed to me) very troubled that such a model still hadn't been agreed and that as a consequence there was a danger of an unfortunate impression being broadcast regarding the regard with which we held our online students:

> "We're still having debates about the amount of time which we should have per cohort or per module and I don't think actually that the time that is given on the timetable really recognises the amount of time that you probably do spend. I still think an awful lot of the organisational issues or the cultural issues within the institution are non-pedagogical ones. They're largely administrative issues that need to be addressed, but they need to be addressed if we are going to give the impression of being an open culture that values our distance learning students as much as it does the [staff] and I don't know we've quite got to that." (2008)

It was a matter of some complaint by other participants as well. They too considered

that developments had been hindered and staff disadvantaged as a consequence.

Lou (HoS) felt that university senior management were unwisely failing to give due recognition to the time, resource and effort needed just because the students were not physically on campus. He slump back, remembering saying at one meeting with senior management at the time:

> " 'Look if you have 20 warm bodies walking through the door that will have to be timetabled, but because they're 20 virtual bodies it doesn't seem to carry the same necessity and that is wrong! Just wrong!' Because they're bringing in money and therefore it should be properly timetabled and treated as if it were a proper class but you've got to be clever because they aren't warm bodies and they don't all walk in at once so somehow or other you've got to allocate that time appropriately so that staff don't feel pressurised and put upon which is what I think they feel at the moment…. There is to a certain extent in [SU] a feeling that some of these initiatives can be done on the cheap and that is something we need to resist. The University needs to recognise that for a whole culture shift to occur it has to be properly resourced and there is no ultimate shortcut." (2005)

> "We are often not adequately resourced to do it to be honest", Tim (SL) stated. "Senior Management is trying to make such courseware exist before the time has been created to do that." (2005)

Such a situation further disturbed Rebecca (L), who also believed that a reasonable amount of time should be allocated:

> "I think there is a lack of appreciation [amongst senior managers] as to how much effort and resource and time it takes to make this work and I think that persists and I think that's disappointing…. There is a lack of appreciation I think at senior levels as to the complexities and the resource requirement to build a module from scratch and also that you can't really do this an hour every day… We don't have chunks of time because we're teaching classes and doing different things." (2008)

In my interview with Lou (HoS) in 2005 he too considered that an adequate allocation of development time and of resources was going to become a much more significant issue if online learning designs were to become more sophisticated:

> "…there should be recognition in terms of time, in terms of course development at this stage because I think the electronic courses do take longer to prepare for if they are done properly at this stage. I mean I'm not saying that will always be the case, but I do think we're moving into, as it were, unchartered territory and we have got to think about the distance learning which means that our distance

> teaching has got to become more sophisticated and I think that we are at a very low level of sophistication at the moment in both cases with the materials that we present." (2005)

As Thomas (eLM) observed to me, in comments that related to remarks made previously about the RAE (see 4.2.1.2), the prospects of advancement offered by the University were seemingly on the reduced side anyway for those enthusiastic solely about teaching. What is more, the absence of a specific costing model for e- and in particular for online learning the situation was even worse for those involved or thinking of becoming involved in these areas. He lamented with a sigh and a throwing apart of his hands how it looked at the time that online delivery of modules was first introduced and the circumstances appeared to be even worse:

> "The Heads of Schools – what were they able to offer people to do it? There was never any policy as to what this should be. So much so when I went around to [the Faculty of Management] some had no time allocated. In 1 or 2 cases they got a couple of hours a week. It was always seen as something extra…….the pressure on people was to do research. 'Why are we starting to get involved with eLearning? How can we? We're teaching goodness knows how many hours a week!'" (2005)

The lack of general recognition of all these aspects made Lou (HoS) feel that staff would not embrace online learning to the extent they could. They had been told that they had to deliver but there was too little inducement or active consultation about how it could be reasonably achieved. A fresh approach needed to be adopted. He particularly emphasised his feeling that:

> "…at the moment there's too much stick and not enough carrot. I think we've got to be much, much more clever about how we allocate staff time. If they feel that they've got sufficient time to do it properly then I think they'll buy into it. If they don't, then they won't and the competition from research and from management and from all those other aspects of their work are such that, unless you make time, then they will resent it and continue to do so." (2005)

Gwen (HoS) was disturbed by the apparent paradox:

> "It's ironic that when [online learning] has been fully recognised by the University as a core to its future business, it's inadequately resourced." (2008)

Speaking to me in 2005, she had reflected then that such practices could be easily

traced back to the early days of this form of provision. Then, the University relied too much on goodwill and enthusiasm, pdf files and PowerPoint slides that had been transferred from existing teaching courseware formed the core content and so it didn't need much further tweaking. Now, she observed (in 2008), the University was operating within more straitened circumstances with higher student-staff ratios and reduced budgets yet with more online learning courses and higher expectations regarding quality. However, the lack of well targeted investment to address issues relating to development and support to secure a robust provision was causing a considerable amount of discontent amongst staff involved in these areas.

Juliette (SL) expressed a reluctance to become further involved with online learning if, in these times of reduced budgets, both University and School managers were trying to run online learning programmes as economically as possible:

> "We shouldn't be using it as an option simply to try and expand numbers and to save money in the process. I'm not happy about moving further forward on such a basis." (2008)

I noted down that of course Morgan (VP) had already told me that the original goal for online learning initiative was precisely that, an increase in postgraduate numbers!

Juliette (SL) went on to say that she felt that such a rationale would inevitably increase staff's concerns about losing control of quality, their inputs and their jobs. Suspicions along these lines had already been raised in Rebecca's (L) mind:

> "I think staff may be exposed particularly if they are to record lectures, [because] why do you need staff [once] you have recorded a lecture, just pay them off and play the video for the next 40 years. There is a threat to staff." (2008)

What is more, these worries could not have been eased by the fact that one School in the University has for a little while employed part-time tutors at lesser rates of pay to specifically support students online. Another School had just appointed staff to undertake similar duties. Appreciative of the criticism that had been circulating Dirk, Head of one of the Schools involved, was defensive when he said that:

> "I'm aware of that issue and that staff have some concerns about that…..I think

> the tasks that we are looking for teaching assistants to handle is a different type of task. It's not eating into a lecturer's job, rather it's just a more cost-effective way of us dealing with that situation and providing career path for some of our graduates perhaps move into the lecturing system, so I'm more positive about that." (2008)

Simon (eLM) also wrote off the criticisms, believing that such posts "just clear some of the full-time lecturer's work-load to be honest", while Tim thought that bringing in auxiliary staff should help:

> "The payoff as far as I can see is that you can release more (effective) time face to face with the students or online talking to students. This does not replace staff and should make their working lives improve." (2008)

4.2.2 DIALOGUE

4.2.2.1 Cyber Study: Little consultation

Two of the participants who were School managers at the time admitted to me that they were confused as what they were entering into. They appeared to have been encouraged by their senior managers to just dive in the hope that they would succeed, even though they themselves had little knowledge and understanding of the world that they were being led into and the wider strategic implications. As Dirk (HoS) put it to me in 2008:

> "There was recognition that it was going to work for one particular faculty but a feeling I recall at the time from colleagues was that it should have been better explained and we should have been allowed to go away and ponder whether it met our own needs. In the end, there was a lukewarm acceptance and little else. A shame as it could have been otherwise." (2008)

Donna (D), who was a head of a School at the start of the online initiative, also believed that this lack of understanding (apparently by all involved including Morgan) led the University down an uncertain path. She said with some force:

> "Everyone was talking about different levels of understanding and we didn't have a common understanding, we knew very little. We understood basically to the level of what we were told... I think that's where we missed a trick because if we'd had – it would not have been rolled out in such an uncoordinated way and the wider strategic implications could have perhaps been strategically dealt with

> in a different way…..Because we really didn't know. Senior Management didn't know either, they didn't know any more than I know. That's the fascinating thing – we're probably, we're lucky where we are, because it's been a bit opportunistic bit of an initiative." (2008)

Beyond what little initial consultation was offered to these School managers, consultation with the rest of the University appeared to have been in effect non-existent. In theory though, there was meant to have been an ongoing group made up of representatives from Schools that was designed as a channel of communication with the centre and where matters of general concern could have appropriately been raised but (according to Gwen (HoS)) it met very infrequently. Schools seemed in those days to just communicate with CDOL directly on an individual and informal basis. Yet, while this arrangement suited some, there were others who felt it was rather too haphazard and left many out of the loop.

> "At the time," Ashley remembered, "you never knew who to consult or if you talked to someone you didn't know how much weight their views carried and whether the adjustments you suggested would be taken on board at an executive level or just slip into the ether." (2008)

What was more, there was no one individual specifically tasked with staff liaison and evaluating the quality of the service. As a consequence, according to Harriet (eLT), no conscious effort appeared to have been made by CDOL to understand user issues. It was only some years later, in May 2006, that a Client Service manager was finally appointed to take on this task.

While Donna (D) had observed (above) that it was lucky that a certain momentum was subsequently achieved, it was not surprising that other universities started to rival the University's online learning initiative as a culture supporting such a delivery system had she believed only been superficially embedded. It's always important, she emphasised, that:

> "before you start on something as big as this is how you actually get people on board and think about how you get everybody to have a common understanding of what is required." (2005)

Change, it would seem, was very largely being imposed from above. It was a model

of top down directives. Thomas (eLM) shook his head in despair when he said "This was and is the way the University is managed" (2005). When asked by me if he felt that the introduction of online learning had been well explained beforehand and the views of practitioners had been acknowledged and accommodated Dirk gave me a wry smile and said:

> "The answer I would like to give is that 'There was full and frank consultation and everyone's opinions were taken on board'. The actual answer is that there was precious little of that. I well remember the meeting in the boardroom where we were informed that this is what we were planning to do and there were the timescales we would work to." (2008)

He thought that colleagues felt "disenfranchised". The approach taken clearly showed, as Ashley (L) put it, classic signs of a "lack of collegiality" (2008). In character, the manner of the introduction appeared to have confirmed others' perception of the main change agent himself. Thomas (eLM) certainly felt (in 2005) that the latter unfortunately carried a certain reputation before him and as a consequence this had placed him at a disadvantage even before introducing this particular initiative. He observed despairingly that:

> "[Morgan] was not terribly popular around the rest of the University. So what you had was 'well this has nothing to do with us' amongst the rest of the University." (2005)

Thomas (eLM) believed that this close association always thereafter tarnished some staff's view of Cyber Study. What is more, Morgan's close relationship with one particular Faculty didn't help matters. The first online learning based modules came from this Faculty of which he had previously been Head and where he was at the time still physically located. Furthermore, the Centre for Distance and Open Learning (CDOL), which was the central unit charged with the management of the virtual learning environment, was answerable to the head of the Faculty and ultimately, Morgan.

Looking back, Tim (SL) also felt that the needs of one particular Faculty had been impressed on the rest of the University like-it-or not, whether the format suited them or not. He was still annoyed:

> "A whole campus model hasn't been established: What happened was that [Faculty] because they had the biggest market on this when it was old-fashioned distance learning and the simplest course materials to deliver – developed the mechanisms by which this thing could happen. However, as a consequence, this immediately excluded a whole bunch of other people who had other ideas for the technology. This was a transmission and delivery system - it was not interactive learning…Even from day one I said to myself, 'This will not satisfy the needs of a significant percentage of the University.' What was rolled out was a completely inappropriate product to the other two Faculties and there was consultation in no meaningful way. Although we were a part of an apparent 'consultation group', it appeared to make little difference to what was rolled out! This Faculty should have made it perfectly clear that [Cyber Study] did not meet our pedagogical needs." (2005)

Lucy (L) however believed that in retrospect, it was the way it had to be handled. She commented with some sadness that following Morgan's departure in 2007 to an educational body that:

> "….the University appeared to lose the online learning drive somewhat. I think sometimes you need that at that level in order to get things done….If they want to compete in the markets it is the only way that the University can go." (2008)

Simon (eLM) acknowledged that the methods that had been used were brutal and caused undue stress but it at least (as he saw it) got staff involved with the technology:

> "People….were forced to upload documentation on the intranet, the comment was no paper format was allowed and ok I appreciate that it wasn't the best way to roll it out but it did get people adopting the technology and getting used to using the technology." (2005)

Gwen (HoS) too cautioned about outright condemnation of the means of introduction and, given what she saw as the reality of the situation, felt that the development had to be pushed through in the way that it was if it was to get going. Despite other quoted remarks, she had seen evidence of CDOL trying to reach out and explain the initiative:

> "…I would agree more than likely there should have been more consultation. It's hindsight that I do wonder how much people would have understood of it in any case or had an interest in it, because we found that, even in my experience at the time… they didn't seem at all interested. They didn't see the relevance to

> their own teaching in any case….It's just I'm conscious of the apathy of staff to be honest. I know [CDOL] arranged so many events to actually invite consultation and participants and people don't turn up." (2005)

4.2.2.2 Improved consultation with Uni Moodle

In contrast to the way that the Cyber Study virtual learning environment had been introduced, half of those participants interviewed in 2008 commented favourably on the effort that had been made to involve staff in the development process for the current Uni Moodle virtual learning environment. The planning for such a move seemed to me at the time and to these participants to have been a more carefully considered operation. For instance, as well as a Project Management Board of senior managers, a Virtual Learning Environment Working Group was set up (with representation of academics from the individual Schools) and regular progress report bulletins were emailed out across the University. Juliette (SL), one of those who sat on this Working Group, saw the introduction of this new platform as being much more staff friendly and as an acknowledgement that lessons had been learnt from the consequences of the Cyber Study launch all those years previously:

> "I think the way it was done was very much more staff orientated. I felt much more positive! 'What is it that, if you could change [Cyber Study] in any way, what would you want it to be able to do' and I think there was that pathway for staff. It has been a lot more of a two-way street I have to say. I feel the change from [Cyber Study] to Moodle generally produced less panic than when we first got [Cyber Study]." (2008)

Juliette (SL) was also of the opinion that in general the planning and implementation to her mind took on board the views of others as much as was feasible:

> "I think that there will always be a time where a school wants something specific to them that isn't feasible right across the University [but] that's up to the school to work around…." (2008)

Lucy (L) smiled when she recalled finding that management publicly:

> "…seemed to listen. I think they have been really responsive to what we asked for." (2008)

Dirk (HoS) was also impressed with the fact that management at least offered more

than he had expected from the first virtual learning environment's experience:

> "As far as I can see, some of the opinions have been listened to and I don't have any particular qualms or concerns about this process to be honest." (2008)

So too did Harriet (eLT) who reflected with satisfaction that staff communications and support documentation had been far better addressed this time around:

> "It's been interesting the whole roll out of Moodle and its implementation and support documents. Communications have been greatly improved, generally yes we are told what is going on now, there's even the Moodle implementation updates from [Information Technology Services] and so on, so I do think that there have been some good lessons learnt and I think overall progress has been made quite extensively I think so, yeah communication, support documentation, things like that are much, much better." (2008)

It was a view that secured the support of Ashley (L), for instance, who was pleased that:

> "[SMT has] certainly learnt from their mistakes this time around. The introduction has been considerably better handled than the introductory phases of new versions of [Cyber Study]." (2008)

He did however realise that the process wasn't perfect, yet foresaw the obvious challenges involved in attempting to directly mount a larger consultative exercise:

> "I imagine, on the other hand, if you asked [academic staff] generally about consultation…I imagine staff wouldn't feel that they were necessarily fully consulted about what was going on. [However] it's a very complex situation obviously and so it's not necessarily always easy to fully consult people…." (2008)

Two of the participants of 2008 put a wider approval of the process down to greater eLiteracy amongst staff (i.e. an increased awareness of online learning and technology that had been acquired through direct use) and to the newer generation of colleagues who were "more comfortable with life online" (Lucy's (L) words) and, as Juliette (SL) suggests, could "see the potential for it."

Incidentally, by this particular time, DeLA had been merged with CULT (Centre for the Underpinning of Learning and Teaching). Simon – an eLearning manager within

this new department DILT (Department for the Improvement of Learning and Teaching) `– stressed that in his planning a top priority had always been to carry a wider community and he felt that by cascading issues and seeking feedback through the Working Group he had managed to achieve this. He had regarded this matter as one of some importance despite the fact that there had been pressure from the University Senior Management Team to restrict such an exercise. He told me that:

> "The University wanted a quicker implementation but……that wasn't [to my mind] necessarily a good thing, the priority for me was basically to get it right and take the time to involve staff from all schools in the processes so that they felt it belonged, you know that they were involved in the process and the VLE belonged to them as well. So, there were some changes to the project timeline but I think we got it right in the end…." (2008)

There was one participant, Thomas (an academic related member of staff), who I however noted adamantly disagreed with others' reported comments, believing that the consultation should have been somewhat more extensive. He was uneasy, for instance, about the way that membership of the Working Group had been constituted and felt it should have allowed for a wider representation:

> "It was a higher level certainly of membership; I mean we're talking Heads of School level. I think they should have broadened that out to an extent, consulted and listened to inputs from more junior academic grades." (2008)

In addition, Rebecca (L) was troubled that online learning technical enthusiasts still appeared to be controlling the agenda. They didn't seem to imagine any challenges in the change-over. However, she wondered how easily those less technically adept would find the new environment:

> "The people that are driving this system of online learning are committed and everything can be e-delivered and there are no problems, there are no impediments but I think in practice lots of people maybe struggle with the environment…..and I think it just doesn't suit everybody…." (2008)

4.3 SYSTEMS OPERATIONS FOR CHANGE

4.3.1 CYBER STUDY VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

4.3.1.1 Publicly embarrassing

When I interviewed Suzanne (SL) at the time that Cyber Study was coming to the end of its life in 2008 she expressed (what appeared to me) a strong belief that:

> "From what I can see of online courseware in my own School they are not in the main effectively set out in an environment that easily allows for the fostering of deeper learning practices and, if this state of affairs continues much longer, our reputation is likely to suffer as a consequence. Thankfully, change seems to be at hand." (2008)

If such a situation was true of the rest of the University – and heresay suggested to her that it largely was – she felt that the institution had been fighting (as she put it) "a battle with a blunt sword"; and although online learning had appeared to have marked up some success with individuals it was completely misguided and ill-informed of the University senior management at that time to believe that other markets, particularly that for large businesses, would ever accept such a static approach to online delivery for other than a short time. There were so many more exciting online learning materials on the same topics that are now starting to be made available from commercial suppliers. She then grimaced, adding that:

> "We've been ahead at some point and we could still have been. We've fallen behind. If only we'd put in resources when we had the chance we would have been properly ahead." (2008)

Donna (D), for her part, recalled when she had discovered that the University's then virtual learning environment was not as advanced as some others that had appeared:

> "I believed the rhetoric that we were at the cutting edge of this and that, but at the time I'd been involved in a particular working group in the University and met colleagues who've gone out into the Oil company sector and said 'We've shown you our [Cyber Study] and what it can do.' And they said 'That's lovely, we'll show you ours.' And theirs was kind of better. A bit embarrassing!" (2008)

Dirk (HoS) had a comparable experience when he was manning the University's stand at an exhibition and happened to visit a rival institution's series of

presentations that they were offering through their environment:

> "The look and feel of theirs was so much more attractive both in terms of design and structure; and it was causing quite a stir. Ours just looked old and tired in comparison. I knew then that we needed to start asking questions about whether it was wise to cling on to [Cyber Study] and start to think about jumping ship to a better platform." (2008)

Tim (SL) agreed that the University had placed itself at a disadvantage and he was bitter about the way in which dissenting colleagues' concerns had been brushed aside. (It ties in with Rebecca's (L) more recently expressed views quoted in 4.2.2.2 and perhaps reflects that in the eyes of some the culture hasn't changed):

> "I think they thought that we were moaning 'minnies' and they were very defensive. They thought that they knew best. They couldn't understand why [their choice of virtual learning environment] wasn't adequate. It was an over simplistic view of what these [environments] are for and how they're used. Any criticism was taken as a direct slight on them, almost personal, so we quite quickly lost favour. I think that because we only had a few students anyway we weren't seen as particularly important. For the sort of thing that they do you can probably do it online through the use of tick boxes. It's a far cry from what we're trying to do." (2005)

Shaking his head, he went on to further point out that the University was absurdly:

> "… constantly promoting [Cyber Study] and saying it was prize winning in this – the prizes are all noddy prizes that you could buy for 3p off the web – look how marvellous we were. If that was the level of our ambition as a University, then we should have given up because that was poor in every respect!" (2005)

4.3.1.2 Hampered online learning

Rebecca (L) had felt that Cyber Study even from the start was cumbersome to use, hindered student learning and the application of innovatory techniques. It was, she observed, a case of technology trying to drive the learning process – with unhappy results:

> "[Cyber Study] was remote from staff, physically remote, and also it seemed to quite a few that it was a bit like the tail wagging the dog…. I think [Cyber Study] curbed innovation and it became quite static and there were no real easy routes for staff to make ad hoc changes particularly minor changes and was quite a

> bureaucratic process. If it's cumbersome and some people can use it and some people can't then you have to play to the lowest common denominator otherwise you will get student complaints." (2008)

This matter came up in Donna's (D) interview as well and she too posited with (what seemed to me) some annoyance that Cyber Study was not up to the job. This was on the basis of the experience and feelings expressed to her:

> "Feedback from colleagues is that they were disappointed with [Cyber Study] because it wasn't able to support all of the more sophisticated things that they would want to use it for – some of the learning outcomes in [my own] Faculty can be quite sophisticated." (2005)

Lou's (HoS) opinions matched that, arguing that the online platform should give the module developer even opportunity to use techniques that would engage the learner and if it can't do then the University should move to another that can.:

> "…people want to do things which are exciting and which from my perspective would be the kind of things that would engage learners and help them learn and I get all the time the feedback that people try to do things and 'it can't be done.' This is the issue I hear most often. Now, that's entirely wrong. If the technology exists which can do it then we've got to use it because we can't probably compete unless we do. I mean, I can understand if there is no technology in the world that will allow this to happen. Then that's a fair enough answer. But if our system is unable to deliver it but others can then we should go with the others. I don't think there's any question about that." (2005)

Returning to the attack with (seemingly to me) some relish, Tim (SL) felt that this state of affairs was hardly surprising because those charged with developing the environment had little understanding of student centred teaching and learning processes:

> "We had a virtual learning environment which was essentially a delivery mechanism – just delivered content. For courses that follow a training pedagogy as opposed to what we were trying to do, an approach based on constructivist principles, experiential learning and so on, it just did not fit. The problem was that the folks charged with developing it were not necessarily academics. They were not trained in teaching and learning. Their own experience of teaching and learning was probably based on a training model…." (2005)

Harry (HoS) held a similar a view:

> "…some areas of the University would claim that the current VLE (Virtual Learning environment) does not offer them access to the facilities that they feel would suit them… The technologists tend to get involved and they weren't necessarily the best academics from a pedagogical point of view…" (2005)

4.3.1.3 Unimaginatively used

There was much concern expressed about the quality of the online materials that have been offered over the years through the two virtual learning environments. Going online to see, for example, just Word and/or pdf files rather than an interactive approach being put up on the VLE represented a very disappointing interpretation of online learning.

Morgan (VP) in 2005 had however held to the belief that "the pedagogy was sound", although paradoxically (I noted) he also said that "We'd like to be more interactive in terms of the materials that are online." He also blamed this on the need "to play to the 56K modem up to this point" without apparently appreciating (in my view) that interactivity can quite easily also come from online discussions easily achieved even with such basic telecommunications equipment.

Looking back, Gwen (HoS) recalled to me in 2008 that Morgan appeared to have held the rather naive belief that 'supply would create its own demand', that if the Schools simply put their existing materials up on Cyber Study whatever their shape 'it would work', people would be somehow magnetically drawn into becoming online learners. Perhaps as a result of this and the pressure to get courseware up she felt that a rather careless attitude was allowed to develop:

> "A significant amount of the materials placed on the virtual learning environment were ill-formed, out of date and with instructions that were less than clear." (2008)

This reflection tallies with an earlier one which she made in 2005 that right from the start there had been:

> "… a tendency for people to shove up their PowerPoint slides and kind of forget about them and not think about creating an interesting learning experience that

sort of feeds into discussion forum and chat and things like that." (2005)

Rebecca (L) grimaced when she recalled what she saw as a very disappointing situation:

> "There was a three line whip to get materials on. It was a strong push to get this up and running and as a consequence there was no dialogue about pedagogy, there was no dialogue about how it was changing the way we do things, there was no dialogue about how we needed to change our lecture deliveries as a consequence for the students. It was essentially a distribution system for documents which were previously delivered on paper." (2008)

Donna's (D) experience and views also tallied with this, that the drive all along was to have material immediately available online without too much thought given to have it could have been redesigned more effectively for this new format:

> "[The pressure was to] get something going, something populated so that the students have got something to use. However, there wasn't real thought given to engaging with the whole pedagogy. You've got to actually facilitate people's learning if you're doing this because if you just give them stuff, well they'll just print it out and what's the point of all that?" (2005)

Harry (HoS) was also noticeably disheartened in the same way by the quality of the online learning courseware that had been published so far and that had been largely transferred to online use untouched from traditional face-to-face delivery:

> "I do believe that there is a lot more we need to do to ensure that we are using it in an educationally effective way. I think we have used it a bit but I'm not always convinced that the pedagogy and the approach may have necessarily been the optimum. I think that there have certainly been rumours in the past that people basically took their word scripts off the lectures and loaded those on [Cyber Study] interspersed with some interactive questions. I don't think that is making best use of an online learning environment." (2005)

Lou (HoS) though sympathised with the way that staff had reacted:

> "…for a stressed overworked lecturer all he or she could do was to put stuff up, old lecture notes and whatever. It's just another obligation which is imposed on them." (2005)

4.3.2 UNI MOODLE VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

4.3.2.1 Versatile and likeable

The overwhelming view of participants was that Uni Moodle was a much more straightforward system to use, offered better navigation, and allowed for the incorporation of exciting student learning experiences.

Ashley (L) expressed pleasure. The new environment placed increased functionality directly into practitioners' own hands, as they were now trusted to manage immediate design and delivery for themselves. It was now giving ownership of online courseware back to the more adventurous academic:

> "…for staff who are using the fairly fundamental features of Moodle it may not have made a big difference one way or the other but staff who are involved in delivering a whole range of different types of material are appreciative of what Moodle can offer." (2008)

He also confidently and rather proudly (I thought) predicted that Uni Moodle, thanks to the range of approaches that they could now adopt, would allow the University to be much more competitive:

> "If they want to compete in the markets it is the only way that the University can go and I think there's so much more we can do with it and [Uni Moodle] is putting us a "wee" bit ahead of the game again. From a student's perspective, they're taking to it like a duck to water. I've had no feedback at all questions other than positive and I've got personal friends here who are students and they'll say it's great!" (2008)

Suzanne (SL) echoed this opinion, believing that the environment offered a substantive base on and through which to offer good quality online and blended curricular provision:

> "Moodle is a well established VLE, designed by people who appreciate the end learners and the end users I think we're moving again really well into that certain area that we need to be in to have a really good learning experience, a really engaging learning experience for the students, so yeah I think we have learnt some good lessons and move forward from them I think." (2008)

Juliette (SL) also expressed to me her belief that a certain acceptance and interest in developing versatile courseware was now gripping colleagues:

> "I think now the vast majority of staff accept that online delivery has to be done. A lot of staff are starting to investigate the new tools and have embedded that within distance learning courses…." (2008)

Rebecca (L) indeed found it a refreshing experience:

> "I feel much more invigorated as a consequence of Moodle. I've got some energy back for teaching online and it's not let me down, you know I'm quite enjoying the engagement with it and getting to know its foibles…." (2008)

Others, like Gwen (HoS), frankly admitted to me that she had been apprehensive about the move to Uni Moodle but the new environment impressed and challenged her:

> "I think that I was quite anxious about using Moodle, certainly online teaching methods, as opposed to necessarily [Cyber Study] because [Cyber Study] in some ways you could just use it as a means of delivery for your didactic material, you know if you just wanted to put up lecture notes that was simply all you had to do....but now well, there's a challenge…so many more possibilities but I really like [Uni Moodle]!" (2008)

Harriet (eLT) commented with a broad smile:

> "I must admit I've grown to like Moodle quicker than I did [Cyber Study]! I think it offers more functionality than we used to have in [Cyber Study] and it certainly offers the things that it was supposed to give us. So, all has been achieved!" (2008)

And Dirk (HoS) laughed when he said:

> "..because I'm a deeply conservative individual and don't like change, one thing I would say is, just as a gut reaction, I've found [Uni Moodle] relatively straightforward. I was nervous and a bit reticent about the shift but I have to say that I'm pleasantly surprised." (2008)

4.3.2.2 Sound utilisation still varies

Opinions were divided over whether Uni Moodle, despite its sound pedagogical based capabilities, was being populated by attractive interactive learning experiences.

Lucy (L) was of the view that the format of online learning was changing for the better:

> "….I think now we are now beginning to look at the curriculum and developing curriculum that fits [online learning] rather than just transferring traditional distance learning. In the past, they just transferred their course materials across, made no changes with a couple of activities stuck at the end…but that to me wasn't [online learning]." (2008)

Thomas (eLM) too was of a similar demeanour when he maintained in 2008 that "big strides" had been over the previous two years in the design of much more student centred active learning experiences:

> "I never thought would happen to be honest! There was a discernible shift now towards active student participation… I think we are now beginning to look at the curriculum and developing curriculum that fits online learning rather than just using traditional rather passive distance learning techniques. We're now starting to think 'Ah yes, there's the student at the end of the system – I need to think about what they are learning and how we are supporting them and how we are facilitating them'." (2008)

Simon (eLM) though took a contrasting view, believing that the overwhelming majority of courseware up online were not good examples of instructional design for online learning:

> "…most people still insist on posting up PowerPoint slides and things like that through the virtual learning environment…so I guess that's how they define [online learning] and I would say most people still think 'Ok, we'll put up notes, supporting documentation and assignment information' – so it tends to be the basics, with a few folk using maybe podcasts, quizzes and discussion forums." (2008)

Juliette (SL) too suspected (from what she saw) that many academic staff were still not taking advantage of the features of the new virtual learning environment that could enhance their materials pedagogically:

> "There're still a lot of lecturers using it just for dumping documents basically, pdfs, Word although within our School there are a few that use it for different things, like trying to use forums, quizzes and things like that but I would say that the majority are using it for PowerPoint, just their lecture notes, lecture slides." (2008)

Some colleagues were (strongly) criticised by Dirk (HoS) for indulging in what he saw as interactive "window dressing", either by intent or through a lack of

understanding:

> "I think there are staff who have perhaps just added a discussion forum to their online module, because it was a hoop they had to jump through as opposed to actually getting it embedded as a good method of delivery to encourage learning." (2008)

He concluded: "I think maybe we're backsliding..."

While Ashley (L) appeared wary of directly criticizing others he considered that a lack of time coupled with an unwillingness to put oneself under more pressure could be factors that currently that held back change:

> "You go down the line of creating more interactivity for example by creating discussion forums then by nature it creates a higher workload not only for the staff member……It has to be the very committed, keen and willing-to-try lecturer who goes down that route." (2008)

Juliette (SL) wasn't sure if time to get to grips with the potential offered by Uni Moodle was the problem. However, she speculated if learning and improvements in practice might well occur in a more measured manner:

> "Whether that is because of time that they have available I don't know. They were…all given the chance to attend training… I guess it takes a longer time to assimilate the potential of what Moodle can do, see what improvements others are hopefully introducing and to adapt your teaching accordingly." (2008)

4.4 PREPARING ACADEMIC STAFF FOR CHANGE

4.4.1 BUILDING ONLINE COMPETENCIES

4.4.1.1 Attitudes to online teaching – academic concerns

At one extreme, Lucy (L) was quite damning as to whether the certain lack of interest with regard to developing more engaging learning materials and experiences for Uni Moodle (commented upon above in 4.3.2.2) could be a reflection of a lack of professional commitment to the honing of teaching skills generally:

> "One of the difficulties in all honesty that we have with online learning is that colleagues are not innovative enough in the classroom. We're not using always innovative methods of assessment; we don't have much collaborative community

based learning so how can they make the connection with the possibility of it working online?" (2008)

Meanwhile Suzanne (SL) reflected that it was maybe just too much of a challenge for many colleagues to break out of more familiar and uncomplicated didactic based teaching:

"…many people they find [online learning] a difficult thing to cope with and to some extent it's a fact of what we did before was straightforward and relatively easy for staff to do compared to what we are being asked to do now. I think that staff teams are now beginning to realise that [online learning] is not as straightforward as putting your lecture notes on the systems. You have to think a little more creatively about how you're going to - for example, assess students online, how you are going to get the interactions you get in the conventional classroom." (2005)

In her view, you needed to master not one but two sets of skills. In her later interview, she returned to this matter, exclaiming:

"It's a double challenge! Developing the content in the first place is one thing. Developing an understanding of how to teach students through delivery learning online, that's another skill set. It's very different from standard teaching. What we're focussed on in the past is having a system that manages content. That puts it online and that's so far away from where we want to be." (2008)

Harriet (eLT), answering a prompt from me, also put the reluctance in some cases down to what she saw as a fear or embarrassment of failure hanging over some otherwise experienced academics who have been asked to enter the online learning arena:

"There can be resistance to change sometimes with more mature staff close to retirement, they have their way of doing things it's a new skill or it's something they've never used, and sometimes there is a fear factor, they are afraid of it. I'm not saying that applies to everybody, but there're some mature people who really take to it. It's very dependent on people's openness to change I think." (2008)

Rebecca (L) paused before she remarked on this issue. She weighed up the two situations. She was accommodating, but felt more comfortable undertaking the teaching role that she had been appointed for. Online learning was, she believed, no real substitute for the satisfaction she got practicing classroom teaching. As was noted earlier in 4.2.2.2 she was also concerned about online learning being

technologically driven:

> "I find teaching interesting and that's why I came into teaching, was to teach so maybe I'm a dinosaur or something but that's what I wanted to do, that's what I signed up for so if we're saying that that the pedagogy of the online rules then maybe I'm not interested in working here anymore. I just don't want it [online learning] to become the be all and end all of teaching and I'm just a bit worried that the religious zeal which some people have, they can't see past it….there's more to the process rather than just use of the technology!" (2008)

From her experience of teaching in the classroom and of facilitating online, Lucy (L) could see how the weight of academic tradition, the pleasure of teaching face-to-face, fear amongst colleagues that a move that could rock the boat of that culture, could well make some colleagues ill-at-ease about getting more deeply involved. She was quite blunt about her own preferences:

> "I still think that there is a culture of wanting to do face-to-face, an historical traditional type of delivery… [but] I now realise it's a completely different job being an online facilitator and that's the bit I think why I don't naturally like it. I'm happy to try anything and I'm positive about online learning, but I have to admit that if I'm given a choice I would rather have a face-to-face class." (2008)

Ashley (L) stressed that the undue emphasis on the technology within senior management's official pronouncements on online learning – rather than on the pedagogy and the ways a mixture or blend of online and face-to-face approaches could be applied to creative more dynamic learning experiences – was putting his back up and so proving counter-productive. Speaking abruptly he also employed the term 'religious zeal' (used by Rebecca):

> "I just don't want online learning to become the be all and end all of teaching and I'm just a bit worried that the religious zeal which some people have, they can't see past it and I think there's a little bit more to learning and teaching rather than this technology. I'm a fan of the blended approach and I think that's got a lot of merit because we are all individuals and we like it sometime but not all the time. I think at the moment is probably fair to say that the concentration is still on the apparatus, it's still on the technology but I would like to think - and here's the opportunity - that there can be discussion about pedagogy which should change what we do...." (2008)

Back in 2005, Morgan (VP) though thought that the reasons why staff didn't get involved with online learning weren't valid. There were, he exclaimed, exciting

possibilities for courses in the market place that weren't being taken up! However, he added quite adamantly that he would "be very disappointed if there are too many staff who feel that eLearning support has been forced upon them… There's plenty of other work to do so it's not necessary that everyone is an online tutor."

Some academic participants' initial apprehension about online learning, the environment and the tactics used had indeed given way over the years to a wider understanding and acceptance of delivery and support through cyberspace.

Suzanne (SL) was now very sympathetic to the view:

> "…that some students will want to study in this way, that if the University is to achieve its desire to have significantly more postgraduate students we need to be reaching out to these markets in a variety of different ways of which online learning is seen as an important part." (2008)

Juliette (SL) appeared to me delighted about the change in attitude amongst many staff:

> "I think that the time [online learning] was first mooted it caused concern amongst some colleagues, probably a good deal of anxiety amongst others but I think as time has gone on it is seen to be a core part of our activities." (2008)

And Donna (D) wondered though what all the fuss was about. She saw the skills needed for facilitating online learning not that much different in terms of supporting face-to-face students. It was, she said,

> "…basically about basic good facilitation type education. Everyone who's done a teaching qualification knows how to do that." (2008)

4.4.1.2 Induction into online teaching – emphasis on technology

There was a noticeable amount of disquiet expressed to myself at the time and specifically during the course of this research about the CPD training devised and delivered by firstly CDOL and DeLA for Cyber Study and then more recently by DILT for Uni Moodle. The overall feeling from participants in my study was that the sessions were not evenly balanced, addressing only the technical rather than the

pedagogical design features of the new environment. (This also, incidentally, emerged as an issue of some concern for Lengyel (2009) in her research connected with web usability at the University using Uni Moodle).

Ashley (L) was irritated by the memory of his induction into Cyber Study:

> "Yeah, it was only later, we started to realise through talking to others, going to conferences and so on that we could create much more exciting, deeper learning online experiences for our students. You can get very annoyed that this wasn't explained to us by the so-called experts. I mean to say, these guys in [CDOL] were surely aware of these possibilities yet for whatever reasons we were just given the basics." (2008)

Harry (HoS) too recalled that:

> "…probably there was a greater emphasis on the technological development and just getting material on [Cyber Study] than there was necessarily a wide debate about the staff training for staff just to how best to mount stuff and just what the best tactics were." (2005)

Suzanne (SL) agreed:

> "There was no coaching or questioning about how this technology would impact on our face-to-face delivery – that was my feeling of [Cyber Study]." (2008)

Lou (HoS) also felt that the teaching aspect at that time was sadly neglected because the stress (in his interpretation of the methodology) was wrong:

> "I think where we've made a mistake is thinking that there is such a thing as online learning. What we've got to do is to go back to square one and think about online teaching, and if we did that I think we would go some way toward improving the learning of those people who are taking courses online." (2005)

Suzanne (SL) was annoyed. This state of affairs, she felt, sadly reflected the (already identified) drivers behind the initiative, and a rather myopic view:

> "They started a vehicle for technological means of recruiting and bringing in new students. But I don't know to what extent perhaps there was a match between that and how we support learning on the pedagogical side … I think there was a recognition of it later on but I think that you're right to say that it might have been better to have just matched the two from the start." (2005)

In terms of its format, it appeared to Ashley (L) that the same sort of CPD previously

given for Cyber Study was being delivered for Uni Moodle. Indeed, Simon confirmed that:

> "I feel that the training I gave for [Uni Moodle] was very similar to the [Cyber Study] training. What we tried to do was to take what we had on [Cyber Study], show them what they had and how that could sort of be enhanced by Moodle I guess." (2008)

In that respect, Juliette (SL) – who was a now reasonably experienced online facilitator and had attended one of Simon's (eLM) sessions – seemingly sadly recalled that:

> "In the days of [Cyber Study] it was still inexcusable that more was not offered even then, although the impression we were being handed down from a number of quarters was that offering chunks of text and answering the occasional email was ok. Who were we to query? However, I guess looking back we should have done! This time round, older and wiser, I've found the actual content very disappointing in that it was pretty low level and a lot of it I could have quite easily picked up myself." (2008)

She went on to talk to me about the longer length online course that she attended on designing and supporting online learning. This had been organised and delivered by educational developers in CULT. It had given her practical insights that she was able to pass on to colleagues. The most important lesson was that pedagogy should always lead over technology. Such community based learning and experiences that she enjoyed on the course were invaluable. (It's a matter that will be returned to later in section 4.4.2.1):

> "…the technology should always be led by teaching and learning. It was hugely important to have that support group going within that module so that we could look back at the then VLE and say: "What is it that we're doing that's helping and what isn't, what do I still need to incorporate in terms of my teaching and learning, what should I be able to do to keep students engaged…." (2008)

Lucy (L) exclaimed that the technical aspects shouldn't have been the only part of the induction into Moodle, especially now that the latter could provide a sound technological base for pedagogically sound practices:

> "Staff concerns were not just technical! It's about how you engage your students, how you develop activities. Under this banner of change management it was entirely the mechanical difference between [Cyber Study] and [Uni Moodle] and

> not about how to we now use and exploit [Uni Moodle] more effectively educationally. I think part of the staff development ought to have included training workshops, call it what you will, on the application of best pedagogical practice or good pedagogical practice because we are moving from a platform where these facilities were not available. It's that best practice, that application of the potential, that hasn't been included in the...training." (2008)

It seemed to me that Harriet's (eLT) views matched those already quoted: Ways of making best use of the new environment from a pedagogical angle should have been incorporated:

> "Overall, the technical support has been very good in terms of 'This is Moodle, these are the buttons, these are the different functions' and [DILT] has been very good at that, I think the technical implementation has been pretty good but it's the other areas where the training support fell down." (2008)

She explained further at my prompting:

> "There's a lot to be said for the kind of embedding for the proper pedagogy required to do online learning properly at that stage [of induction into the environment] rather than kind of shoehorning it in anywhere else as a kind of optional component. I think if people are going to be writing stuff for learners at a distance then they need some fairly good training to be able to do it and I don't think you can make that training optional. They've really got to be able to demonstrate the ability to actually prepare materials adequately…." (2008)

Participants were, in my experience of working with them outside of this research, not ignorant of what can be achieved in terms of encouraging student centred active learning experiences through the use of such technology. However, they would have liked opportunities for themselves and their less informed colleagues to acquaint/re-acquaint themselves with these possibilities within the new environment. As Suzanne (SL) had observed in 2005:

> "The pedagogy and the technology platform [are] very much interlinked together and they need to be seen together." (2005)

Rebecca (L) felt an awareness of online learning's capabilities, where when and how it could be educationally most effective wasn't tackled, and it was troubling for her why it wasn't:

> "…I think everybody's confused about it, if I was being absolutely honest. Why,

> in my view, don't we do the whole systems approach to this and let the pedagogy lead it supported by the technology. To me that should be the way round it goes not the other way round." (2008)

Dirk (HoS) felt that by solely concentrating on CPD that was devoted to the technology an opportunity to provide developmental support to create and deliver a more robust online provision was missed:

> "I think generally that we overlooked the pedagogy. We have been much less keen to emphasise things like that in CPD and staff development." (2008)

Lou (HoS) believed that it would have negative consequences:

> "That's one issue which will rebound because in the end people will start these courses but they won't continue them much less apply for another one, so I think we've really go to go back to square one and rethink our strategy." (2005)

Given the challenges involved, Juliette (SL) wondered though if a deliberately phased initiative had been decided upon by DILT, the organizers of the induction?:

> "[Maybe it was a case of DILT trying to get] staff…used to the technical side first, living with it for a bit, and then having a revisit and saying right now you've had it for a while what have you done with it, have you done anything exciting, what have you been using, and if you haven't used it why haven't you? We can offer you further training.
>
> Maybe what [they were thinking was] we have to do first is to get staff happy with the technical side of things and then start thinking about the pedagogical side of things after that probably… it's too much to cope with all at once." (2008)

However, on a practical level and taking into account all the other pressures, she speculated about whether more training could have ever been arranged and how it could have been delivered:

> "I think that within the confines of the timetabling for it I think you couldn't have done anything else unless perhaps the material had been provided for you to go and look at a later date." (2008)

Harry (HoS) felt that CPD concentrating on the pedagogical aspects of online learning should definitely have been a standard offering and, the concern was about fitting it in, then this could be achieved by making it more concise in nature. Like

Lou (HoS) he felt that there might be dire consequences if DILT did not offer a mandatory course in this area. Sitting up in his chair, he remarked:

> "I think it should be mandatory before people go or start developing material. I would say that there should be a mandatory course for eTutors as well. It could well save people a huge amount of development time if they undertook that, provided wasn't something embellished more than it need to be but certainly got through a number of key messages, 'do's and don'ts' and gave them access to further information. There is a quality of service you are giving to people and if you don't know the key steps then we could get that service horrendously wrong." (2005)

Gwen believed that the decision made by DILT (as the delivery agent) to focus the induction CPD on the technology rather than the pedagogy was down to two factors. Firstly, the feeling was that most academic staff had been previously using Cyber Study for some years pedagogical aspects were similar and it was only the technical details of the new environment that were different and therefore needed; and secondly, there was the view that academic staff had been through initial professional training[9] and therefore had had opportunities then and there to develop relevant online pedagogical skills. The problem though, she observed, was that online training had only relatively recently been incorporated into the latter course and that (as has been discovered earlier under 4.3.1.3 and 4.3.2.2) online learning design and facilitating skills were still very much regarded as just posting up PowerPoints and pdf files – in other words, "electronic page turning" (Kennedy & McNaught, 1997).

4.4.1.3 Other pressures on time restricts access to continuing professional development

In the change-over of the virtual learning environment to Moodle, Dirk (HoS) seemed optimistic when he said that at management level at least his colleagues were finally:

> "…becoming much more aware now of staff development issues. I think there is a move towards realising that this kind of technology is something that you either do properly or not at all and that you need to invest in the people as well as the technology." (2008)

[9] Postgraduate Certificate in [University Level Learning & Teaching] (PgC [ULLT)], part of which is now compulsory for most new members of the academic staff

A challenge is how to get more academic staff – including managers – to therefore acquire an understanding of online learning and to participate in continuing professional development activities; how to appeal to those people who could get most benefit from it – or as Tim (SL) put it: "the whole management of how do you make that happen." (2008)

Getting colleagues to attend traditionally delivered programmes of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) organized by either CDOL or its successor body DILT has been an ongoing problem for some time. Thomas (eLM) was eager to find:

> "…an answer because we're aware we've constantly holding open events and inviting people to come along and people just don't take turn up and they disregard that opportunity and often then forget about us when they do need help.
>
> They might enjoy it once they're here. They might find it incredibly useful but it is just shoehorning it into people's diaries schedules and convincing them it is worthwhile but it's the difficult part. I think that there're huge opportunities there, huge benefits for us as well but I think it does come back to this - how you convince people it is worthwhile and in their interests - and I think that is more difficult." (2008)

Lucy (L) wondered if low attendances could be linked to her belief that online learning still wasn't really being seen by Senior and Middle Management generally as a key element in the University's range of services (also referenced earlier in 4.2.1.3):

> "I do think the opportunities are there if people took them. And I suppose you can't make people take them. And I personally think that [DILT] has been very willing to be flexible… I agree that there are certain different ways of 'attacking' the issue. However, I think the University as a whole has to see and value online learning as a more integral part of the provision and that will then maybe influence staff's willingness to attend what is available for them in terms of development." (2008)

Suzanne (SL) also certainly believed that CPD wasn't as high on most people's agenda compared to the other calls on their time. It wasn't so much a lack of concern for improving their teaching but the fact that there just wasn't enough free time to accommodate CPD, bearing in mind the other pressures that they faced nowadays

and the fact that it can be easily missed out on:

> "There are a lot of staff who are interested in CPD generally and there are a proportion of those who are significantly interested in CPD relative to online learning (or eLearning). But it's probably still the minority, I think it's time, it's a thing that gets squeezed. [pause]. We're a University that is attempting to on the basis of pretty high staff-student ratios, working pretty hard I think compared to many universities, and also trying to move forward and do research as well. So you've got staff there who are being pushed to do research and to publish, have a pretty high workload as far as teaching is concerned, often have high workloads in terms of administration, courses, various things like that…..people who are recruiting students to courses. And the thing that gets left in the wings….is their own continuing professional development as a teacher, because they can get away with it." (2005)

4.4.1.4 Make continuing professional development more accessible

Participants felt that there could be ways that CPD could be made more relevant and more manageable within the timeframes that most of them were forced to operate to. Dirk (HoS) commented on CPD that he had recently attended in relation to aspects of eLearning some of which he found informative but a lot that wasn't at the present time. Rather it should:

> "…be made up of reasonable bite-sized chunks because academic managers can't release staff with huge amounts of time – then I think that would be very beneficial." (2008)

Suzanne (SL) judged that while there was still a place for lengthier CPD that offered in-depth coverage of educational issues there was also definitely a place for more immediately accessible menu of professional development for the busy academic:

> "As more people join the University and go through the PgC [ULLT] course they do a lot of work there in that context medium. So there're more and more people within the system who understand what they should be doing and how they should be approaching it and hopefully that will percolate through the others.
>
> So we do need a really good course but we also need smaller chunks for others who would not devote the amount of time to a 15 credit modules. There's only going to be a certain number of people who would do that unless it's made a requirement you know. You need a basic entry CPD here: 'Here are the basic sorts of things you need to do before you're unleashed.' " (2008)

Rebecca (L) was taken (it appeared to me) with such possibilities:

> "I would suggest maybe that a kind of phased delivery where "here's the basics, this is what you need to do in order to set up an online learning module, this is how you upload material", a series of phase deliveries like that." (2008)

Juliette (SL) was quite frank to me about her attitude. She was forever juggling a number of commitments, explaining workloads were such that she and others necessarily often had to deal with up-skilling on an "as and when" basis:

> I know that it's one of my weaknesses really but it is very much what I need to know to get through to-day. Thinking about what you might need to know in three months time, I'll worry about that in three months time! Probably most of us will learn by trial and error…we are very reactive to it rather than being proactive to it and thinking ...'What can we do with it?'" (2008)

Lou (HoS) had observed in 2005 that:

> "It's a perennial problem. People are not going to go on these courses unless they feel a desperate need. So…we've got to try and develop a just-in-time mode or some way of individualising the learning."

(However, there isn't any evidence that such a concept was considered by CDOL at that time). Harry's (HoS) reflected thoughts then also seemed to tally with Lou's view that, for maximum effect, staff development is best applied on a just-in-time basis:

> "I think the timing is critical because it is like everything else. People will only do it when they know they're going to have to use it. I don't think staff will go through the staff development in the event that sometimes in the next 2 years they might do some online work. It really needs to be believed that the commitment to the business care has been established, that [School Z] will be developing a new course online and when that is clearly part of the School's plan it is at the point that the staff development should be provided…" (2005)

Lucy (L) was very appreciative of the online links to expert just-in-time advice from the University and elsewhere that Simon was in 2008 starting to make available on the DILT website:

> "I've found those resources listed on the [DILT] website and the advice they offer to be really, really helpful when I'm planning and supporting groups

online."

There was also scope, reflected Ashley (L), for a 'showcase' to be provided either there or within Uni Moodle with examples of best practices that were already developed.

> "It would", he said (I noted) with great enthusiasm, "be of benefit to both new and experienced academics. They would be able to see with advantage what was happening across the University, something that's difficult otherwise… I think would benefit staff would be to see it actually used in 5 to 10 minutes presentations this is for example how the [Faculy X] used it, this is how the [Y] School have used it and so share ideas." (2008)

Rebecca (L) was very enthusiastic about the same idea:

> "Staff then can say, 'Well, that's interesting' or 'I don't like that' or we can have people say, 'Well, this worked really well', 'This didn't really work at all and I'll have to change it', and 'This was what I've learnt.' So, it's communicating those kinds of learning outputs from staff experience." (2008)

As well as being made accessible on a casual basis online, these showcases could be used as resources within the context, for instance, of workshops, in-house conferences for all or as part of a School meeting. It was all a question of finding sundry ways to enlighten colleagues:

> "Some people never go to any staff development and I think we have to find ways that encourage people to go and perhaps having it combine with some other specific event where they would be there anyway." (Donna (D), 2008)

Yet another instance of accessible online support could have been found within Uni Moodle, where from the start a "sandpit" area had been created where staff could without harm explore the functionality of Moodle: have a play, create courses, change settings, etc. Indeed Harriet (eLT) remarked:

> "Hats off to [DILT]…the creation of this feature has, I feel, given a number of lecturers a lot more confidence when it came to designing and delivering online modules." (2008)

Ongoing personalised learning opportunities from the centre had also been created. "The nature of people", said Simon (eLM) with a smile, "is that they phone me up and ask for help on an immediate basis!"(2008). One participant, Donna (D),

strongly argued for the establishment of this practice on a more formally constituted footing through the creation of a drop-in centre which staff could contact and/or go to top-up their understanding when and where they need guidance. When interviewed the first time in 2005, she recalled then that she had had experience of such a facility on a visit to the US and the impression that it had made on her:

> "I went to a US university some years ago and they had a department when staff could go into the department and work with people to see how they could improve what they were putting online. I thought that was invaluable. I would like to see that centrally. I think that could be a valuable resource where you would have more than one technologist working in a small departmental area where staff could ring up or staff could go and sit with side by side and develop things which would be of high quality and where there would be a lot more sharing across all faculties and schools so the learning objects could actually be used by each school." (2005)

Harry (HoS) also talked of his experience of visiting a similar centre in the US and the advantage of having such a facility:

> "…staff quite liked coming out of their own environment, where they could work in peace there rather than sitting in their office disrupted. I think the advantage was that they could have an on-hand expert/advice if they got stuck or needed guidance. They couldn't do all their work there, but at certain points they could use it almost as a drop in centre." (2005)

Ashley's (L) conclusions seemed to match others' quoted opinions. He too felt that, in trying to balance other pressures, staff mostly only considered the need for training when it was an absolute necessity, although – having said that – he did wonder if there was ever an appropriate time:

> "To a certain extent I think using the system for real is the point at which staff fully engage and then some issues come to light that haven't really been appreciated during earlier training. However I suspect training is one of these things where you can't win. If you had had it later then people would complain, "Oh, I should have been getting prepared much earlier than this for the introduction of the system." (2008)

He had however come to appreciate the value of a diverse range of CPD opportunities being made available and in particular the need to resource a network of readily accessible advice in connection with design and delivery:

> "If you stick to just one kind of resource only some people will benefit from it and maybe other people who would have done better than some other resource…Different things might help different people. Help with the design and delivery of such features needs to be available and close to hand." (2008)

4.4.2 PROVIDING NEW ROLES FOR CHANGE

4.4.2.1 Value of networking and communities of practice

The more informal features of networking seemed to be attractive to many participants, and preferably on a face-to-face basis:

> "The big value of CPD for quite a lot of people is meeting other people who are at the same level, and this can greatly help discussions and activities undertaken by and between the members of the group once they've met each other face to face," observed Tim (SL) (2005).

As Ashley (L) explained, face-to-face workshops gave great added value especially as they gave opportunities for an easier exchange of tips and examples:

> "When you're engaging with other colleagues in that same environment, then you get to hear different types of things going on in their classes. And having a workshop is a great place where we can start talking about those things in addition to gaining whatever skills and knowledge that workshop is primarily geared towards." (2008)

Juliette (SL) also felt that CPD for online learning is most effectively delivered to colleagues as part of a blended package with at least one face-to-face meeting first to socialise and address basic information:

> "Once you've met each other then online then that's where online comes in but I think for most people CPD – 100% online / never meeting anyone – I can't see that appealing to our own staff. I was a member of a short programme on designing and supporting eLearning that was organised this way by the Educational Developers in [COOL]. You also have some of that on [ULLT]. It's brilliant as it's 'learning while doing'…You first meet up and then you obtain a much better idea of the challenges while being a student online!" (2008)

Lucy (L) also suggested another possibility, the setting up of a community of practice to enable greater ongoing support and understanding of online learning and possibilities for blended learning:

> "The obvious thing would be to have a Moodle teachers' users group…We don't share very many best practices internally let alone go outside to find out what they are. People like myself who are really ...in this game. I personally would find that very helpful." (2008)

She also envisaged this as an invaluable blended experience with periodic face-to-face meetings – when it was appropriate and/or convenient for most – where knowledge and advice could be informally shared between both inexperienced and experienced practitioners. She continued:

> "In fact, I think one of the greatest aspects of it would be that it would be largely taking place in the very environment that we are using for our teaching, with colleagues who are actually already making use of the tool and hearing what they had to say…giving information about the pitfalls to watch out for. …talking about some of the areas and minimize some of the problem areas as well." (2008)

Elsewhere, communities of practice for online learning have already been established to good effect on a more informal basis. Ashley (L) was very pleased to offer an example of the support he received from a series of drop-in workshops arranged and run on a co-operative basis within one particular school:

> "It's not a training session, you go there on a casual basis when needed...there are advertised times…and a colleague helps you at first to set up your own module and if you have any further questions or encounter any problems someone is there to come and help you. So it's a kind of hands-on practice…. It's been very useful and convenient. You don't feel an idiot if you make a mistake. Hopefully it'll become a long running feature." (2008)

With the change-over to the Uni Moodle virtual learning environment, many of the participants were heartened even more by the move to a system that endorsed and benefited further from a worldwide community of support.

Indeed, Harriet (eLT) foresaw this Moodle community resource giving the University a certain advantage once again:

> "The fact that Moodle is driven by thousands of people around the world, the potential is there to develop an amazing VLE[10]. I think it gives us a good platform

[10] Virtual Learning Environment

> to now lead forward, exchanging ideas and information with more experienced users and helping us to start bolting all these other things that can improve the learning experience." (2008)

Lucy (L) echoed that view:

> "I like to think Moodle which is used internationally we might be able to benefit from best practice and share learning from all the other Moodle users in the world." (2008)

4.4.2.2 Support from the centre not held in high regard

Learning technology support at a local level was crucially missing in the early stages of the online learning initiative. CDOL didn't really see it as part of their role. Sighing, Suzanne (SL) observed that:

> "The [Centre for Distance and Open Learning] as it then was pretty remote to what happened in the Schools and the [academic] staff had very little interaction with it… I think they saw themselves as controlling the commanding heights of eLearning and they weren't really concerned with helping on the day-to-day levels. I think there was a bit of a centralistic view at work. You know that they liked to maintain control, a bit of a control culture." (2008)

On the other hand, Thomas (eLM) in his interview with me in 2005 that what he also saw as limited support to the University "had to be because it was the VLE that they had to maintain and the fact that left [CDOL] with very few resources for the actual eLearning support" (2005). And with that, they could, in Gwen's (HoS) words, "only do what they could" (2005). They saw themselves as providing limited generic technical assistance with what funding they had.

Even following the merger in 2007 of DeLA with COOL to form DILT, it has remained a relatively small team, predominantly learning technologists, and is (as seen by myself) quite stretched resource-wise when trying to fulfill its responsibilities for eLearning. As an outsider, Harriet (eLT) confirmed such a view:

> "[DILT] can't be everywhere and there are only five days and then so many staff in all the different Schools. They're a small team I think from an educational perspective and it's difficult to cover all and I do feel that this lack of any expansion in key areas has been a contributory factor to the lost momentum that

> we've experienced over the years in terms of producing quality learning materials." (2008)

Similarly, Dirk (HoS) acknowledged that:

> "DILT has limited resources, painfully so at times. We would like them to be able to do more. Yes, that is part of the problem. They can't do as much as we and I appreciate they might like." (2008)

If any staff wished for assistance centrally in the days of Cyber Study it certainly meant, as I recall, waiting their turn. The DeLA team were fully occupied either maintaining the University's unique virtual learning environment or were involved with quality control of the courseware that was being uploaded. All adjustments to the courseware had to be tunneled through CDOL and then DeLA for quality control reasons with regards to the technology. It was a prospect that, as I recall, caused much concern amongst academic staff, especially when deadlines were looming. Morgan (VP) at the time (2005) defended such steps ("What we can't do is just allow anything to go out.").

Tim (SL) expressed his doubts over whether DILT – even if they had been bequeathed sufficient resources – would now be able to offer a high quality support service:

> "I'm not convinced that [DILT] knows exactly what they're meant to be focusing on at the moment. I think there's still a very defensive nature from some within [DILT], that you're not allowed to question why decisions have been made because "we are the experts, that's why!" but they're no longer the sole experts within the University and I think it's just down to basic communication still all these years later, basic communication, speak to people and listen to the answers and that is something [DeLA] (as it was) as a general rule have never been very good at listening. If they don't like the answers, then it tends to get brushed under the carpet whereas if they actually listened to the issues that people face, had a constructive discussion about what could be done to resolve it, they might find themselves a little bit more popular…." (2008)

It was certainly a historical and psychological legacy that was candidly confirmed to me by Thomas (eLM):

> "Back then, a lot of it was down to attitudes held by DeLA staff members and the end result was that Schools to some extent don't have confidence in support

centrally even to this day!" (2008)

I noted that he had winced in memory (in his 2005 interview) when he recalled that the culture within CDOL at that time could be described as one of "introverted expertise" rather than a desirable "client-led professionalism" In any event, he felt that it certainly hadn't helped the change management process.

4.4.2.3 Support from local eLearning Technologists highly praised

Schools across the University have increasingly since 2004 established and funded their own eLearning Technologist posts. If a School went for such a post, then they rather than others could determine their own agenda and priorities. Furthermore, once there, the Technologist concerned could directly assist with the instructional design from a very early stage.

Donna, as a senior academic manager, was critical of the central services that had been on offer. In her view, more localized support was a necessity; it answered a real need:

> "The purely centralised model doesn't work quite so well. It's removed from the people who knew about it……I think that there's a requirement for more support based within either Faculty or Schools so people can draw on that person….. Otherwise, you get stuck in a queue waiting to see whoever then it takes forever and people get disheartened. I think you need to strike while the iron is hot!" So one of the ways from a school level I thought I could help more was to actually employ someone who could help in the design of activity based learning which would give more educational value if you like which has concerned us because we've developed quite a few modules online." (2005)

Her remarks tied in (I felt) with comments made earlier (in 4.4.2.2) about the value placed by academics in more accessible assistance. Suzanne (SL) echoed such a view when she was interviewed in 2008:

> "There is something about having a person or some sort of system where staff can go and sit with somebody and say 'This is what I would like. This is the educational experience I would like to give to students. Show me what is available for this to happen.' I don't think staff have actually got that skill yet to do it themselves." (2008)

So did Dirk (HoS):

> "Our academics know what we want roughly but we don't know the technical bits of how to do that. We need somebody as an interfacer who has experience of converting that into something which is robust, manageable and does the job." (2008)

Harriet, as an eLearning Technologist, felt that her colleagues could certainly offer far more positive support to academic staff than DILT could do from the centre. Such posts were designed to give more personalized, locally accessible support, with the detailed specifications angled to meet School needs. They also in the same way allowed the individual who was appointed the chance to acquire subject specific skills and so be in a position to offer colleagues more credible advice:

> "We have a key understanding and a much better, deeper understanding than DILT has of the core issues. We also have a broad knowledge of the support departments and how they interact as well. We are [also] easy to reach and to contact; we're not juggling a lot of other [responsibilities]. You can focus purely on the subject matter in there, we can get a good understanding of the subject matter in hand whether you want it or not. You know, you can wrap your head around things a lot quicker, you understand the terminology, I mean it's things at that basic level that staff appreciate I think….if the staff are comfortable telling me about whatever level of difficulty that they are having, whether it is something really daft and insignificant but it's still important to them, or whether it is something quite major." (2008)

Lucy (L) too happily concluded that her School's eLearning Technologist had a better understanding of staff's ability levels than DILT. The individual concerned was very supportive and, having talked to colleagues in other parts of the University, this characteristic appeared to be the pattern in their Schools as well:

> "[The eLearning Technologists] get to know all the staff really well, they get to know the modules and also the types of materials that the students get normally exposed to so you don't keep on having to start again from scratch each time you want advice and practical help. I think all of the people in [my] School probably wouldn't have managed if we hadn't had an eLearning local support officer." (2008)

Two other participants greatly praised the ways that their particular eLearning Technologists carried out their duties and for the human touch that they gave to the role. It would seem in fact that the Technologists concerned were able to develop,

manage and deliver a range of training sessions directly suited to their school's needs.

Firstly, Rebecca (L) spoke to me at the time that induction to Uni Moodle was being delivered:

> "Because Gerald is available…you can physically go and see him rather than e-mailing. He can show you how to do something there and then and then, alongside these, he set up regular Thursday morning drop-in sessions…
>
> I think it's reassuring to have multiple bites of the cherry, opportunities to drop in, opportunities to see Gerald face-to-face and have demonstrations on how it's done. He's been very, very approachable and supportive and God knows how many of these show-and-tells that he's done, he must be exhausted. That was good, I think without that, without him, it would have been a much harder challenge so I think his engagement and involvement has helped a pretty smooth roll-out in the [Faculty]." (2008)

It was also quite apparent (to me) that Dirk (HoS) saw the local support within his School from his eLearning Technologist as invaluable. It was, he recalled, conducted with a determination to get all colleagues trained up to the required standard:

> "The training on [Uni Moodle] that we've had, which is being done largely in-house by Valerie here, has been very good and she's been incredibly dogmatic about getting all of the staff through their training. I think it's been very useful basically having someone in-house who cajoles and bullies everyone in the school basically to go through the training and then has been very good about setting up additional sessions subsequently for the staff who've missed things." (2008)

Juliette (SL) was of the opinion that there should definitely be more than one eLearning support person in each School ("mini DILTs") like there was in her own School:

> "Having people on site definitely helps because if you have a problem right here and now and it's actually going to affect the delivery of something you're going to do within the next couple of hours and having someone can go to is a definite help, I would think if that was possible someone who is dedicated to this sort of thing in every School. It would be ideal but how reasonable that is I don't know because [Petra], [Val] and [Chris] must cost an awful lot and having that in every School may be quite difficult." (2008)

Indeed, in Tim's (SL) experience as a visiting academic in another institution corroborated this. Jabbing the air with a finger, he pointed out that:

> "You need to have a team in order to produce good learning materials for online support. You need a designer, you need a programmer, you need a learning technologist for pedagogical aspects and if you've got those three together you can then work with an academic and it does not matter what the academic's discipline is – to produce rich learning materials because you've got the theme to help the academic." (2005)

If investment hasn't been made on this scale, there are now in two of the Schools (Pharmacy and Nursing) support teams made up of an eLearning senior lecturer and one/two learning technologists.

Tim (SL) further believed when we had our conversational interview in 2008 that further cross-university investment would reap its own rewards in terms of quality courseware produced:

> "I think the totally centrally controlled and functioning thing isn't good for the nature of the University. It is too diverse.
>
> So person or persons who can [at a local level] support and act as an intermediate between the technology essential pedagogies, the product, context and specific lecturers problems at the electronic projector-face wherever they are – that is going to be really, really useful. That kind of assistance, interpretative help is really good because it's getting people's ideas out into the areas where they are not confident about putting them into that sort of area." (2008)

This point was underlined by Harriet who had had experience of being an eLearning Technologist in two Schools. She emphasised not just how the role is vital in terms of assisting those who wish to use the technology but more importantly in terms of ensuring that wherever this technology is deployed it should always be underpinned by sound pedagogical principles with instructional designs that put effective student-centred participation and learning to the fore. She had already undertaken additional CPD in some of the PgC [ULLT] modules to help her in these respects:

> "I think the eLearning supporting role is an important one in progressing the academic community's use of technology but also the actual teaching and learning approach and the content development, instructional design in teaching and learning. I don't just mean for eLearning…but to create a more student

> centred, less traditional or conventional and dare I say get away slightly staid or blinkered approach to teaching generally. On my own initiative, I set up example modules in the [School of x], to say that "this is how it could be structured" and I know that my [eLearning support] colleagues did the something similar in other schools…It was also admittedly for our own benefit because we ourselves needed to know what [Uni Moodle] could and couldn't do." (2008)

4.4.2.4 Support from the centre improving

One period where DILT itself was able to offer invaluable localised support was during this change-over to Uni Moodle, with learning technologists from DILT visiting Schools on an organised weekly half-day basis. Where Schools had eLearning Technologists such as in Gwen's (HoS) case, this presence supplemented any help that DILT could give.

She applauded the efforts of Claire, the eLearning Technologist, and those of Rosemary, a learning technologist from DILT:

> "In terms of CPD for Moodle [Claire] and [Rosemary] were very supportive. I'm very positive about things like this. I went to a couple of the sessions when they had the open labs and also other things which you could go to. I used that a fair bit… The flexibility was there. And there were a lot of sessions. And so I think they provided a good service." (2008)

Where a School didn't have an eLearning Technologist in post this assistance from DILT appeared to be especially appreciated and it also established a DILT point of contact at other times.

> "You always know you've got a name or face [at DILT] that you can phone and contact", observed Suzanne (SL) smiling, "so although [Rosemary] is only here on Tuesday afternoon you know where she is on other days and you can contact her." (2008)

Juliette (SL) also thought that DILT had been very accommodating, and again mention was made of the benefit of having a clearly identified contact:

> "…DILT had been very supportive and I think the staff now know that they're there in terms of having a central contact with having [Jack] coming in every Thursday …. The fact that they are flexible….. Sometimes in the past we as staff didn't know enough about how [DILT] was set out to know which person to go

to sometimes." (2008)

Rebecca (L) believed that there had been a noticeable improvement in DILT's general approach of late, assisted by the move to an online environment that was built on a sound pedagogical base:

> "I think [DILT] has recently got a much better angle on what the student is seeing and what the student is experiencing. I think in the past because they were a little bit technically driven focusing purely on 'what else can we get this to do, what can be bolted into it now', they weren't necessarily thinking about the student or the end user...." (2008)

Nevertheless, because it maybe takes time to achieve significant change, there was still evidence of the old attitudes remaining. In her interview, Harriet (eLT) recalled that she was determined to ensure that the staff within her School were adequately prepared for the changeover to Moodle but she found that in the end she had to adapt the CPD materials from DILT so that they could more adequately address colleagues' needs in as a sensitive way as possible:

> "Firstly, the [Uni Moodle CPD] material wasn't ready in time for when we wanted to deliver. Secondly, what material was available I think was fine if you had a certain level of understanding, I think it showed that [DILT] had a basic lack of knowledge about the core level of ability that staff have within schools. If it's not written down clearly a staff member is rarely going to say 'Well actually, I don't understand these things' because they think that they are stupid. They think they are being stupid and it's not been deemed important enough to put down on paper then they must be stupid for not knowing it. And I think that's a shame. So that's basically why the decision was made that we would adapt [DILT's] materials." (2008)

4.4.2.5 Learning Advancement Consultants – muddled implementation

In 2004, a post of Learning Advancement Consultants (LAC) was also created within each School. The post-holders were expected to act as academic change agents or "boundary spanners" (Rossiter, 2009), encouraging, collating and disseminating good academic practice in teaching, learning and assessment, acting as 'spokes' interacting with the 'hub' that was then CULT (Centre for the Underpinning of Learning and Teaching) and which is now part of DILT. As Morgan (VP) announced the initiative spoke about the initiative at the time:

> "I think it's very important that staff generally are professional teachers so merely by recognizing these post, teaching and learning strategy generally get a higher profile." (2005)

On the other hand, the extent to which these posts were held in high regard by the University was queried by participants. LACs at that time[11] weren't paid any additional allowance, given clear agendas, with their working arrangements was very much determined by the School which they were in. What's more, the manner of their appointment was very much left up to individual Schools to decide:

> "Some have gone into it because they enthusiastically want to do it. I sense some of them have got that job for other reasons. The Heads knew the School had to come up with somebody and these individuals have been dumped with that job. And so that is the downside…." (Harry (HoS), 2005)

Their agenda of work was again left open for the Schools to decide. Suzanne (SL) had been a LAC and told me (in an agitated tone) of her troubled feelings whilst in the post:

> "The [LACs] had almost had to suggest what our agenda is to the Senior Management within the School and say 'Is this what you want us to do?' There was no leadership to say 'Oh great I'm glad that you're here.' Now there're so many things to do. 'Could you have a look at A, B and C?' It would be a little encouraging to people. So if we weren't saying 'Well, okay, we're interested in this, we'd like to make a difference.' On the other hand, we could have just sat on their tails and done absolutely nothing and nobody in the School would have said anything as along as we went along to the appropriate meetings." (2008)

While LACs might have therefore been thought of as bridge-builders between technology and pedagogy, as catalysts for change, it again depended on the Schools and the individuals themselves whether anything was achieved in those respects. Apart from the Faculty of Management which had a LAC for eLearning they were not appointed thematically elsewhere and it would have been by chance someone with that professional interest was appointed. As Juliette (SL) tersely put it, regarding those appointed in her faculty:

> "That's another thing that hasn't been well thought through in relation to

[11] 2009: These posts have since been reformatted

> eLearning because they weren't eLearning people. They just didn't have the knowledge, awareness, call it what you will to handle these particular issues. It was disappointing because, if they'd had this they could have helped us greatly as bridges between technology and what we wanted to try and achieve with our learning outcomes." (2008)

Tim (SL) echoed such an opinion, feeling that more specific help for eLearning would be able to empower its appropriate academic use at a local level:

> "I could see tremendous advantages with the University extending the idea of [LACs] but with a university specified responsibility to assist others within their disciplinary areas develop materials support students online or a mix of settings. In particular, I feel sure these posts could offer much improved understanding about the pedagogical requirements of online learning within their disciplines." (2005)

4.5 SUMMARY

4.5.1 PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP FOR CHANGE

The vision for online learning was that it was a means of attracting postgraduate students to the University. However, it took 3 years before an eLearning strategy to be produced. About that time the University started to prepare for the Research Assessment Exercise and also about that time participants began to detect a relative lessening in University senior management team interest in online learning. A lack of guidance and a failure to react to complaints – still to this day – over the costing of developing and delivering online courseware and timetabling is a matter of continuing concern to participants. Again, it appeared to participants that a 'message' was being sent out that online learning and teaching was of lesser importance than it had been.

At the launch of the online learning initiative, there was apparently very little consultation offered and as a result there was considerable bewilderment and little common understanding. Change was largely imposed from above. One particular Faculty model for online learning was also seemingly chosen and forced on the whole of the University. However, on a positive note, there was more consultation and better communication before and during the launch of the Moodle virtual

learning environment.

4.5.2 SYSTEMS OPERATIONS FOR CHANGE

Learning experiences offered via the Cyber Study virtual learning environment were not seen by many participants as engaging and pedagogically sound. In addition, many materials were rather static and had just been transferred from face-to-face situations. The attitude of senior management and central agencies did not help in this respect. Uni Moodle, the new virtual learning environment was warmly welcomed as allowing for more ownership and the incorporation of sound pedagogical features. However, as of the time of interviewing – which were admittedly early days – the courseware that had been featured on the environment still exhibited disappointing traits.

4.5.3 PREPARING ACADEMIC STAFF FOR CHANGE

Changing over to new methods of technologically enhanced methods of teaching were regarded and experienced as a challenge especially for those staff who felt threatened by the pressure to understand and practice new pedagogical skills. In relation to the CPD devised by DILT for induction into the Moodle virtual learning environment there was disquiet expressed by a significant number of the academic participants that it merely stressed the technical changes rather seizing the opportunity to demonstrate the instructional design and support that could now be incorporated. The views of participants on traditionally arranged CPD for online learning suggested that the latter has largely not been successful owing to what were seen as more pressing priorities; and that other more accessible CPD formats could have proved and, in the future, will be more effective.

Ongoing locally based professional support was partly a reflection of the limited resources that CDOL/DeLA/DILT had for a number of years to deploy and also the attitude that the latter had previously adopted. So, Schools had increasingly appointed their own much praised eLearning Technologists to provide assistance while academic support was mainly designed to be supported through Learning Enhancement Consultants (although this scheme appeared to have been somewhat

poorly implemented).

The next and final chapter is devoted to discussion of the study: the conclusions drawn from cognitive dissonance analysis, the relationship of the themed findings to the literature and new contributions to it and implications of the study with regards to the original research questions, the arising recommendations, the issues that remain unanswered and the scope for further research.

5. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 TENSIONS REFLECTED FROM THE CHANGE PROCESS

From the researcher's perspective, field notes act as prompts or "aide memoires" to recapture in this case, my own mind, impressions as to how the phenomenon was experienced at individual levels. They added to the data gathered elsewhere: The transcripts of the interviews, the published official and research sources, and the personally informed background knowledge and deployed within the recycling of the hermeneutic circle as first mentioned in section 3.4.6. From the reader's point of view, field notes and the details gleaned from them further hopefully help underscore the trustworthiness of the research (and more especially, its confirmability, dependability and authenticity) as referred to in section 3.6. Please see the examples given in Appendix 6 concerning **Dirk** (HoS), **Suzanne** (SL) and **Ashley** (L).

One crucial aspect of the human experience of the change management phenomenon was the "cognitive dissonance" expressed in the interviews coupled with their descriptive, non-verbal communication and tonal impressions to be found in the associated field notes. This concept, as developed by Festinger (1957), stated that if individuals during a time of organisational change are under pressure to adjust their ways against their better judgement without any consultation being offered then feelings of guilt, anger or frustration and even acts of resistance may result. I highlight in this section the most significant areas of conflict through examples revealed in the research evidence.

5.1.1 TENSIONS ABOUT THE LACK OF CONSULTATION AND VISION

In the first online learning Initiative it appeared that academic manager participants were rather upset by the scarcity of information that would have normally been

expected to have been shared by the Senior Management Team (SMT). There was also concern about the lack of discussion that was offered with regards both the vision and more practical steps to be undertaken. As Donna (a HoS at the time) put it rather forcefully, "We knew very little. We understood basically to the level of what we were told…" (2008). The Heads of Schools could appreciate as managers themselves that the SMT had adopted a basically ill-considered position, one that was driven by a desire to increase graduate enrolments through the use of online learning without much thought being given to the educational quality of the experience and the need to accordingly develop staff in the use of such approaches (see more below). "The fact that the University had invested so much in the development of [Cyber Study] and had the infrastructure in place was the key motivating factor!", exclaimed Thomas (eLM) with some bitterness, while **Suzanne** (SL) echoed such a feeling, remarking that: “We actually created the platform before we did extensive market research” (2005). Equally annoyed, Gwen (HoS) dismissed the tactic as being rather "clumsy" (2005).

5.1.2 TENSIONS ABOUT THE LACK OF A STRATEGY

As has been highlighted in the previous chapter, this initial lack of vision also progressed into a continuing lack of a detailed University eLearning strategy. When interviewed in 2008, **Dirk** (HoS) rather sorrowfully reflected on what he saw as institutional drift on the matter of online learning and the nature of the rather vague pronouncements being made here by SMT. These included the general policy document that was eventually released 3 years after the online learning launch. He very much wanted a "beacon" and, worryingly, there still wasn't one. Lucy (L) and Rebecca (L) appeared from my notes as disturbed and bewildered respectively about the continuing unfortunate situation (2008): How could they therefore be motivated to pursue online learning with enthusiasm? So, here again cognitive discourse could be evidenced. Lawson and Price (2003) suggested that if employees of an organisation truly emotionally “believe in its overall purpose, they will be happy to change their overall behaviour to serve that purpose” (p. 33). In yet another instance, both Harry (HoS) and **Suzanne** (SL) wondered if during the run-up to the RAE the increasing emphasis by SMT on needing to increase the quantity and quality of the

University's research output was sadly sending out signals suggesting teaching in general was of lesser importance in terms of career progression, certainly within Scotia University. Such questions of dissonance are apparently not unusual though in Higher Education generally. Taylor (2009) has argued that “The student learning experience is claimed to be at the heart of the university mission, but part of the unwritten rules for obtaining senior academic status in the UK seems to be the ability to prove one can consistently find ways to avoid teaching.”

Instead of an official strategy or policy muddled thinking over time filled the vacuum on administrative measures connected with online learning. Gwen (HoS), for instance, was disturbed at the apparent paradox even at the tail end of the period under investigation that while online learning recognised by the University “as a core to its future business, it’s [still] inadequately resourced.” (2008). Another paradox surfaced in that while fellow Head of School **Dirk** was equally troubled I noted about funding, with the gaps plugged by staff goodwill and possible effect on the quality of provision if this was withdrawn he was also rather defensive and sensitive about his own decision to appoint part-time tutors for online work on lower rates of pay than ordinary lecturers.

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5.1.3 TENSIONS AMONGST COLLEAGUES

In some ways, the poor standard of materials that were in evidence on Cyber Study could be excused somewhat by a culture that encouraged a less than exact approach to designing online resources, where appropriate CPD was lacking and based around a VLE that was not well structured for the learning process anyway. Yet there was still criticism from some participants that colleagues should have made more of an effort to address and overcome such challenges. Gwen and Harry were particularly troubled about this matter. There was however greater annoyance expressed by some academic participants once Uni Moodle was in place and their colleagues still weren't taking full advantage of a platform that now possessed fit-for-purpose pedagogical capabilities. However, could this again come down to the CPD offered or could it be that the need to learn technology enhanced teaching skills was anyway too much of a challenge – or could it be a mixture of both? Lucy (L) was quite

critical of fellow practitioners I thought when she said that "…colleagues are not innovative enough in the classroom". Such a lack of enthusiasm to attempt more seemed to be reinforced by Lucy when she observed that "…what we did before was straightforward and relatively easy for staff to do..." **Dirk** (HoS) also dismissed some online practices and learning resources that were in evidence and had received praise, as ill-conceived "window dressing".

5.1.4 TENSIONS ABOUT CONTROL AND AUDIT

There was an initial upset caused by the perception that SMT and managers were trying to unduly rush staff into online learning. The regime was characterised in general by Lou (HoS) in 2005 as being one of "too much stick and not enough carrot." Rebecca (L) and fellow lecturer Lucy also found themselves in something of an unsurprising dilemma over a choice of what were to them the great attractions of teaching face-to-face rather than unappealing nature of online facilitating in a strange and uncomfortable setting. Lucy (L) was candid should she be given an option:"…I have to admit that if I'm given a choice I would rather have a face-to-face class." The particular format of the development driven by Morgan from the start raised much concern amongst academic staff who were not part of the Faculty associated with him. Tim observed with annoyance that "a whole campus model hasn't been established" (2005). **Suzanne** (SL) was "unnerved" by the initiative being led by the views of one man (Morgan, VP) and firmly believed that the university was trying to do too much (2005). Academic participants felt pressed to comply with the call from Morgan to put materials on line as quickly as possible. **Ashley** (L) – looking back in 2008 – clearly felt "disenfranchised" and that there was a "lack of collegiality". As highlighted in the field notes (see appendix 6) he resignedly put it down as a typical managerial arrogance. Thomas (eLM) observed despairingly (in 2005) that as a consequence: "…what you had was 'well this has nothing to do with us' attitude amongst the rest of the University" (2005).

5.1.5 TENSIONS SURROUNDING CDOL/DeLA/DILT

Both Lecturers **Ashley** and Rebecca especially resented the fact that the online learning initiative appeared to be controlled on a day-to-day level by technology

enthusiasts with a religious-like fervour for the topic and little understanding of the vital pedagogical connection (as was demonstrated earlier in the CPD on offer). It sadly suggested moreover to Juliette (SL) that "offering chunks of text and answering the occasional email was ok" at the expense of "about how you engage your students, how you develop activities. Lou (HoS) reflected that "…people want to do things that are exciting and which from my perspective would be the kind of things that would engage learners and help them learn and I get all the time the feedback that people try and do things and 'it can't be done' (2005)." Harry held a similar view adding: The technologists tend to get involved and they aren't necessarily the best academics from a pedagogical point of view…" (2005).

In a related matter, this ill feeling also extended to the CPD provision emanating from the centre and it needing to meet the everyday needs of staff, making this easily accessible, and getting away from just the technological aspects of online learning that had been provided. As Lou (HoS) observed in 2005, "…we've got to try and develop a just-in-time mode or some way of individualising the learning", which was a point of view that Juliette (SL) was again in complete agreement with. There was a suspicion that the central online learning support bodies over time in their various guises didn't really want to change direction with regards to this matter anyway. Indeed, Thomas (eLM), a present day member of DILT candidly admitted to me that previously a lot of this could be explained by a fixed attitude of mind held by some of the then staff members.

5.1.6 TENSIONS ABOUT LEARNING ADVANCEMENT CO-ORDINATORS

While the eLearning Technologist posts at School level came in for much praise amongst participants the reaction to LACs was less approving. " It is a pity that the Learning Advancement Co-ordinator posts were not taken up with the same degree of enthusiasm by the Heads of Schools, and although there were valid and not so valid reasons for this state of affairs the result drew criticism from three of the participants. Having had the experience of being a LAC **Suzanne** (SL) was most troubled. It was, as Juliette (SL) snappily put it, "another thing that hasn't been well thought through,,," particularly in terms of eLearning.

5.1.7 INFERENCES

What has been learnt in overall terms from this analysis feeds – as will be seen – into the recommendations later on in this chapter. It is crucial when addressing a transformative shift in the delivery of teaching and learning that a Senior Management Team should be very sensitive to how its actions will be perceived and take steps to address these through consensual leadership and practice. There is much tension in modern day higher education and amongst its staff because of the various demands now put upon it and Scotia was no exception here. Much of the apparent 'cognitive dissonance' that was generated amongst and between participants can be traced back to senior management's intransigence on certain matters. This picture however also seems part of a worrying trend nationally: Kolsaker (2008) observes that. "Certainly, since the 1980s there is evidence of an increasingly directive and prescriptive regime…." (p. 513) in Higher Education.

It is therefore most important for institutional and human well-being that senior management should have taken a more inclusive listening and enabling approach. Burnes and James (1995) confirm that "if an organization embarks on a change project which is markedly out of step with the attitudes of those involved, it will meet resistance unless those concerned change their attitudes; and this is only likely to occur if they believe that they have some choice in the matter" (p.17). In doing so, it was and is therefore more likely to become a good example of that "learning organisation" described by McPherson (2003) yet still meet the needs of performability placed on it by external agencies and society.

5.2 RELATIONSHIP OF THEMED FINDINGS TO THE LITERATURE

5.2.1 PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP FOR CHANGE

As was observed by Antonacopoulou, Ferdinand, Graca, and Easterby-Smith (2005), organisational change and associated issues are complex matters and it proved to be the case in this study. There were a range of phenomenological experiences that

emerged in my investigation by way of reactions to various structural, cultural, technological elements impacting on participants. There has been a tendency in recent years towards self-referencing, centralised management arrangements (Duke, 2002; Boezerooy, 2006) and experiences identified within the 'Planning and Leadership for Change' essential theme – in terms of a lack of appropriate policies and the need to encourage dialogue – seem to confirm that such a state existed in Scotia University's case as well, certainly leading up to the launch of the online learning imitative and throughout its early implementation. The University's goals for eLearning and online learning in particular were discernable, in so far as they could be, with directly increasing postgraduate student enrolments and the business benefits this would bring to an institution which didn't have a well populated geographic hinterland. Such priorities – prevalent amongst many higher education institutions (McWilliam, 2004; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Land, 2006) – were substantiated by the fact that when a strategy for eLearning eventually appeared, it wasn't linked to any teaching and learning strategy but rather market forces.

A clear inter-connecting plan for both and a concern for imparting this and consulting with colleagues, are however critical factors for successful change (Clark, 1998; Kirkpatrick 2001). It is especially so if the change – as in this case – attempted to involve and embed a new teaching and learning culture (Newton, 2003). Perhaps it was too much of a test for the University's senior management team to successfully accommodate the human dimension (Ramsden, 1998). Even with the best will in the world it was always going to be a challenge addressing the various cultural concerns that exist in a higher education institution (Bates, 1999; Aldred, 2003) and reaching the trigger point (or critical mass of academic staff) for successful innovation (Rogers, 1995; Pelliccione & Giddings, 2002).

Quoted reactions by participants to the pronouncements by senior management were (as evidenced previously) ones of amazement and bewilderment. Existing staff apprehensions and misapprehensions needed to have been acknowledged and allayed by senior management right from the start, as Ramsden (1998) and McAlpine and

Jackson (2000) advise. Staff are more likely to follow new directions if these are fully and unambiguously set out.

A large body of researchers (Fullan, 1991; Betts, 1998; Lewis, 1998; Clay, 1999; Edmonds, 1999; Spotts, 1999; Kouzes & Posner, 2000; MacKenzie & Staley, 2000; Rockwell, Schauer, Fritz, & Marx, 2000; Alexander, 2001; Gilbert, 2001b; Kirkpatrick, 2001; Lee, 2001; Millheim, 2001; Butler & Sellbom, 2002; Dearlove, 2002; Oliver & Dempster, 2002; Williams, 2002; Hanson, 2003; McPherson, 2003; Newton, 2003; Welsh & Metcalf, 2003; Latchem, 2004; Bijiker, 2005; Cousin, 2005, Wheeler, 2009) variously seem to suggest that successful implementation of plans are promoted by adopting more of a social deterministic approach, with the strategies clearly explained to academic staff so that the latter can understand the rationale and their new roles and accept the changes as reasonable. The participants' experiences suggested that none of these aspects were addressed and that stress – as identified in studies by Beckmann and Cooper (2004), McWilliam (2004), Main (2004) and Wells (2006) – occurred. In particular, serious concerns expressed by some of the participants about resourcing, timetabling and recognition of online learning were apparently not acknowledged by the University senior management, with fresh suspicions raised about what some of the participants perceived as the underlying new managerial, market and technological deterministic drivers. Again, the literature supports a view that all these aspects should have definitely been addressed early on if inclusivity was to have been promoted (Noble, 1998; Clay, 1999; Spotts, 1999; Kirkpatrick, 2001; Hanson, 2003). Keller's ARCS model (Surry, 2000) has particular relevance here in terms of engaging and building confidence through understanding, ownership and dialogue (Dixon, 1999). However, Stiles and Yorke's research (2004) suggests that the absence of this in the University (certainly early on) is not that unusual. The detection by some participants in a lessening of interest in online learning and a growing focus by the University's senior management team on the institution's research profile also made them wonder if teaching – and involvement with online teaching - was now something that would not command recognition and therefore the devotion of their energies (Newton, 2003).

The end-result was furthermore compromised by the main change agent himself. Although he had power and influence and had used it to get his way in the past, cutting through the encrusted structures (Duderstadt, 2000), he could not as a result now be seen by participants as possessing sufficient credibility in this particular role (Webb, 1996; McShane & Von Glinow, 1998; Bates, 1999; Land, 2000; McLoughlin, 2000; Bower, 2001; Land, 2001; Rowland, 2002; Roxå, Olsson, & Mårtensson, 2007; Handal, 2008; Gosling, 2009b, 2010). As Bates (1999) and Robertson (2008) both confirm, senior university management often holds unrealistic expectations about rapidly embedding change (or applying "domesticating" tendencies (Land, 2001)) despite as in this instance possessing genuine feelings of unease (as commented on by the academic staff participants). Morgan appeared impatient over creating a voluntary movement in the spirit of Rogers' diffusion of innovations model (1995) and resorted, amidst some consternation, to driving it through, using one particular faculty model, with rather weakened and sub-standard results. The force behind this action and having no brook with deviation indeed raises additional worries about the negative effects of control and surveillance (Foucault, 1991; McWilliam, 2004; Land & Bayne, 2005; Maltby & Mackie, 2009). As Martinsuo (1996) posits, such a tactic more than likely means that change fails to take root within the pre-existing culture of the institution.

Before the change-over to the second generation virtual learning environment a working group was set up containing academic representatives from the individual Schools of the University. Such a move offered practitioners more of the necessary level of deliberation that was advocated above in the literature. It provided an advice giving framework that allowed a dialogue to be maintained between members and to and from the rest of the University. As such it aligns itself with the concept of a roundtable conference that is advocated by Latchem and Hanna (2001b) and Ehrmann (2002) along with the networking remarked upon by Gunn (1998), Milheim (2001) and Uys (2007).

5.2.2 SYSTEMS OPERATIONS FOR CHANGE

The initial virtual learning environment was perceived by some of the participants as rather intimidating and cumbersome in design, not pedagogically sound and was felt to have been promoted by senior management as more of a repository from transferred lecture materials rather than a vehicle for interactive engagement and deeper learning. Accordingly, the situation seemed to equate to studies elsewhere that suggest that this environment is going to fail to engage and motivate (Cuban, 2001; Millheim, 2001; Newton, 2003; Bayne, 2004, 2005, 2008; Hemmi, Bayne, & Land, 2009). The environment also caused noted disquiet and embarrassment amongst participants who were interested in achieving more, particularly by way of a platform for courseware that was aimed at meeting the sophisticated expectations of the corporate sector. Placing online existing traditionally delivered learning resources without further refinement was, however, very much a reflection of the time (Jones & Lau, 2009). It was technologically deterministic and viewed by some of the participants as being managed and controlled by 'new managerial' personnel (Wells, 2006) in the shape of learning technologists based in CDOL and who later constituted a large majority of the staff compared to the few academic developers (Gosling, 2009a) in the merged DILT. It further tallies with a feeling that as a consequence it operated to a overbearing agenda (Knight & Wilcox, 1998; Land, 2001, 2006) pursuing market driven forces (Gosling 2009b, 2010).

The second virtual learning environment, Uni Moodle, offered a lot more potential: it was seen as more approachable, easier to use, more pedagogically sound (Dougiamas, 1998) and could through its features bring together and offer more engaging courseware and student-centred support. However, from what has emerged from participants' experiences it would seem that historical legacies of inadequate pedagogical design and collaborative interactive support have still not been adequately addressed and that these continue to act as a brake on the development of a mainstream high standard provision (Rodes, Knapczyk, & Chapman, 2000; Kirkpatrick, 2001; Newton, 2003).

5.2.3 PREPARING ACADEMIC STAFF FOR CHANGE

A significant unease was felt by participants surrounding the skills required to successfully practice active learning online, in particular with regards to structuring and designing the content for their subject area and in respect of facilitating student engagement for this as well, although some of this reflects many participants' preferences for traditional forms of delivery where human interaction is direct. Working in such settings are after all what lecturers are still mainly appointed to do, is part of their cultural identity and exerts a strong pull in terms of personal and professional satisfaction (Jenkins, 1996; Isaacs & Parker, 1997; Newton, 2003; Hanson, 2009) while life online offers, it would seem, quite uncomfortable challenges, not only in terms of the technology but also in terms of aligning this technology to serve the best interests of student centred learning within their subject areas (Bates, 1999; Clay, 1999). There is indeed much evidence that, to be most effective, CPD should initially have a subject based focus (Jenkins, 1996; Hanrahan, Ryan, Duncan, 2001; Rowland, 2000; Hung & Nichani, 2002); Rowland, 2002; Clegg, 2003; Oliver, 2003; Russell, 2009).

Particular anxiety was also expressed about how about both the induction courses for the virtual learning environments dwelt entirely with its technical features – what Lester (2009) termed the "technical-rational or technocratic" approach – rather than also integrating it with considered higher cognitive design issues – the "reflective or creative-interpretative" model (Lester, 2009); and that they were unfortunately formulated and delivered to a large extent by the centre on a generic basis (Rhoades, 1996). The literature here reinforces the view that to promote knowledge and deepen reflective understanding it is of critical importance for educational development concepts to always lead technology rather than the other way round (Taylor, Lopez, & Quadrelli, 1996; Dougiasmas, 1998; Rodes, Knapczyk, & Chapman, 2000; Laurillard, 2002; Aldred, 2003; Zemsky & Massy, 2004; Salmon, 2005). This doesn't mean that other aspects should be neglected. As Elgort (2005), Singh, O'Donoghue, and Worton (2005), Carew, Havnes, and Stensaker (2006), Ledfoe, Bell, and Armour (2008), Gosling (2009a, 2009b) and Hoessler, Britnell, and Stockley (2010) highlight, CPD will not positively contribute to an online learning

provision if it doesn't ensure an understanding of how best to ensure a sound integration of pedagogical, technological and research informed practices. Such a picture of the state of things at that time might again be a reflection of an online learning support department whose outlook could have been unduly influenced by staff with a technological background (Gosling, 2009a) and also through a desire by the senior university executive to adopt and promote a new managerial approach to CPD that is easier to monitor for results and quality from the centre (Boud, 1999; McWilliam, 2002; Crawford; 2007).

Time is acknowledged by the academic participants as something they have comparatively little of in relation to CPD. It was a constraint first highlighted with regards to online learning in the HEIST study (2003) undertaken at the University. Research elsewhere also reveals that such a situation is not unique to academic staff here (Felton & Evans, 2002; Kolbo & Turnage, 2002; Shephard, Haslam, Hutchings, & Furneaux, 2004) and is a reflection of the increased complexity of staff workloads prevalent in Higher Education generally (Brew & Boud, 1996). It also confirms that the interest shown by participants in more alternative – 'professionally enriching' (Ferman, 2002) – approaches to CPD that are effective, comfortable and innovative are worth pursuing (Candy, 1996; Naidoo, 2005; Housego & Anderson, 2007; Roxå, Olsson, & Mårtensson, 2007; Handal, 2008). This would particularly apply to just-in-time methods (Felton & Evans, 2002) not only face-to-face but online (Aldred, 2003; Mahony & Wozniak, 2005; Beggan & Morgan, 2008) and/or blended (Winograd, 2000; Bennett & Marsh, 2002; Al-Mahmood & McLoughlin, 2004; Fitzgibbon & Jones, 2004), with timely individualised support, available through individual face-to-face tutorials (Engeldinger & Love, 1998; Cravener, 1999; Collis & Moonen; 2001; Oliver & Dempster, 2002), through drop-in centres areas (O'Hagan, 2003; Bell & Bell, 2005) or 'phoning through to help-desks for immediate advice and assistance (Hitch & MacBrayne, 2003).

In addition, more informal self-help networking that occurs as a consequence of workshop involvement or in their own right as communities of practice was held in favour by participants in this study and tallies with published research findings

(Fullan, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Boud, 1999; Cox, 2002; Uys & Tulloch, 2007) as an active way of building new knowledge and understanding within parts of and across an organisation (Boud, 1999; Hanrahan, Ryan & Duncan, 2001; Rowland, 2001; Hung & Nichani, 2002; Moore, 2002; Rowland, 2002; Oliver, 2003; Russell, 2009). All in all, participants in my study felt that a responsive CPD provision which could beneficially address their real world needs would be of benefit and this view is also supported by the literature (Jenkins, 1996; Johnston & McCormack, 1996; Jaffee, 1998; Bates, 1999; Fox, 1999; Rockwell, Schauer, Fritz, & Marx, 2000; Shannon & Doube, 2004; Russell, 2009). Diverse and accessible formats of CPD appeal to a range of learning styles and create a much more affective engagement (Battersby, 1999; Carr-Chellman & Duchastel, 2000; Buckley, 2002; Housego & Anderson, 2007).

The success of having eLearning Advisors within Schools of the University, compared with the relatively patchy support that has been available from the centre, confirms research suggesting that CPD works more effectively, if it can be situated locally, discipline related and focused on the likely scenarios within this of those attending (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Herrington & Oliver, 1995; Jenkins, 1996; Bates, 1999; Newton, 2003; Oliver & Dempster, 2002; Naidoo, 2005; Salmon, 2005; Sharpe, Benfield, & Francis, 2006). Such embedded staff are more easily accessible, have increased awareness of particular curricular needs and can directly assist colleagues through their learning technology expertise (Taylor, 2003). It's regrettable that the Learning Advancement Consultants as first deployed were not able to provide an equal level of developmental support at the academic level and which the research shows could be of equally great benefit (Engeldinger & Love, 1998; Cravener, 1999; Collis & Moonen, 2001; Oliver & Dempster, 2002; Clegg, 2003; Housego & Anderson, 2007, Clegg, 2009; Gosling, 2009b).

5.3 NEW CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LITERATURE

5.3.1 PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

As noted by Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004) phenomenology is a research method that is much used for various and diverse enquiries in the human and social studies. However, significant variation can be detected within this area. In nursing, Saunders (2003) notes – and the reader can confirm this by running their eyes down the reference list to be found in this thesis – there is a "plethora" (p. 292) of published studies. On the other hand, it has been hard for me to find use of phenomenology to a similar degree in aspects of management studies. This was a surprise to Ehrich (2005) as well because phenomenological methodology, the goal of which is to throw light the meanings of human experience, can be used to effectively explore a range of human experiences here. In this respect my study within the educational management field follows a methodological approach that very few it would seem have trodden before.

5.3.2 CONTEXT

This study's main contribution is to the stock of the existing research literature in the field of change management in general and more especially to the personal and emotional dimensions of such change with reference to new technologically enhanced delivery methodologies. As seen above, it further confirms various findings in previously published research studies. Where, on the other hand, it makes more of a distinct contribution to the literature is through the context of the change.

5.3.2.1 LENGTH OF INVOLVEMENT

It's worth re-emphasising that Scotia University was a very early pioneer in terms of setting up a cross-institutional centre in 1997 for supporting learning online and started implementing a raft of courses across the institution in 1999. This occurred at a time when nearly every other British Higher Education institution wasn't even thinking about investing in and deploying such technologically enhanced teaching and learning techniques in the first place or was reliant on localised initiatives, small-scale in nature. By happy coincidence, the launch of online modules even occurred in

exactly the same month and year that the term "eLearning" was first used (in the USA)[12]!

The study therefore offers an insight into a whole range of experiences over a time span the length and extent of which, as far as I can determine, probably can't be rivalled by any other Higher Education institution in the United Kingdom. In itself, though, a relatively long history of engagement with such a mode of provision can be a blessing and a curse. Having established a certain pattern of development and delivery – a certain lifeworld – over this period, it then appeared very difficult to escape from it. Jones and Lau (2009) identify eLearning as having progressed through first and second generation strategies. However, the movement forward in Scotia University's case from a technologically determined, transmissive concept to an engaging, collaborative and constructively aligned pedagogical one – despite the change to a more sympathetically inclined virtual learning environment – was unfortunately not so pronounced. The early commitment from senior university management (for all its deficiencies) was unfortunately and seemingly not so strongly sustained nor was a more flexible learning culture skilfully embedded across the institution to the extent that it could realise its full potential.

5.3.2.2 TRANSFER OF TEACHING AND LEARNING PROFICIENCES

There is also a further distinct contribution to the literature, yet related to the above, in terms of building on teaching and learning proficiencies achieved elsewhere. The initiative was occurring in what was a Higher Education institution that already had a well recognized commitment to teaching and learning. Scotia University has a very proud standing in the league tables published by various United Kingdom newspapers (viz. The Times/Sunday Times, The Guardian, and The Independent) rating the quality of teaching and learning and the success with which students achieve gainful employment upon graduating. However, this is a reflection of the more traditional and therefore probably easier-to-appreciate face-to-face contexts in which it largely operates. Despite leading success in one environment, and accepting the view that all teaching can be seen as social, my study I feel underlines the fact

[12] http://www.leerbeleving.nl/wbts/1/history_of_elearning.html

that each environment calls for a new set of pedagogical skills (Matuga, 2001) and infrastructural support (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2006). The skillbase of academic staff did not seemingly easily transfer, expand and adapt to the adoption of highly competent online design and development. Nor was support for this initiative and the acquisition of such new skills by and for teaching staff easily arrived at. In the light of themes generated, the situation moved from what was to many academic participants and their managers a well understood and fulfilling setting to a more challenging multi-modal state and one that has still to be adequately addressed particularly in terms of offering a suitable range of holistic CPD solutions at central and subject discipline levels.

5.4 ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Moustakas (1994) states that hermeneutic phenomenology "searches for meanings and essences of experiences rather than measurements and explanations" (p. 21). "It does not seek to predict or determine relationships" (p. 105) or offer us the possibility of effective theory with which we can now explain the world, but it can develop an understanding of complex issues that may not be immediately implicit in surface responses. We are offered “the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world” (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). In so doing, a deeper understanding is achieved of what people go through as they conduct their day-to-day lives, in the language and context of everyday life. It helps understand how and why. As a consequence, it’s good at understanding situated social processes such as has been investigated here, where the aim has been to try and understand a human phenomenon: the ‘as lived’ experience of the change management processes within the University connected with online learning and associated experiences connected with opportunities for continuing professional development.

The analysis has been based on an interpretative paradigm, arising from the Heideggerian hermeneutic tradition, and more exactly following a methodological approach informed by the works of Professor Max van Manen (1990). Such an approach accommodates the subjective model of educational management as developed by Greenfield (1973). I took the data descriptions of experiences captured from the interviews and through a process of consideration, reflection and ontological interpretation reduced them until the essences of the described experiences were revealed. Although the reported experience can never be the same as when first lived, I undertook these dialogues in the hope that the meanings brought forth did not entirely lose too much of the initial feeling.

5.4.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND DEDUCTIONS

5.4.2.1 What were the perceptions of participants with regards to the introduction of online learning?

The response is largely covered through participants' 'as lived' experiences that have been brought together under essential theme one ("Planning and Leadership for Change") and reflected in the feelings expressed (section 5.1) with regards to the lack of consultation, the controlling/'new managerial' nature of the exercise, the lack of strategy that appeared to be in place and the absence of guidance that was offered with regards to the costing of courses, their design and implementation as well as resource and recognition issues for academic staff. Where the discussion touches on the Cyber Study virtual learning environment and the way that the design of that platform did not encourage engagement and pedagogical sound practices then this research question is also addressed by participants' 'as lived' experiences that have been assembled under the second essential theme ("Systems Operations for Change").

5.4.2.2 What were the perceptions of participants with regards the working practices that were encouraged and the working patterns that emerged?

These were covered by the thematic findings in one and two and highlighted in the tensions examined in section 5.1. Within theme one, better consultation was perceived to have been practiced with the introduction to the Uni Moodle

environment. However, the impression left in the minds of many participants was that research matters were in the ascendency, the continuing resource and timetabling issues were not being acknowledged, with a conclusion being drawn that (with regards to online learning) quantity and commodification were the aims without too much regard to quality. With theme two, the predominant feeling of participants in relation to the working patterns that emerged, particularly with Cyber Study and unfortunately then with Uni Moodle, was that many of the learning materials being placed online were indeed static and unengaging in nature. This is particularly unfortunate in the case of Uni Moodle because it offers far more possibilities to incorporate rich interaction and deeper learning experiences.

5.4.2.3 What were seen by the participants to have been the character of the continuing professional support and development programmes in online learning that were offered?

Here, the 'as lived' experiences gathered together under theme three ("Preparing Academic Staff for Change") were most pertinent. The prevailing views of participants were that the respective inductions into both Cyber Study and Uni Moodle concentrated on technical rather than pedagogical mastery. In those ways it perpetuated the practices mentioned in the preceding research question. Finding sufficient time for CPD was a common experience while juggling other pressures and therefore participants (as mentioned most latterly in section 5.1) were disappointed to find that by 2008 more just-in-time and scalable opportunities to suit 'real world' conditions had still not been offered to supplement or even replace more traditional pre-bookable workshops and longer length courses. The local CPD initiatives that have been established by School eLearning Technologists have been much appreciated by the academic participants because of its contextualised setting, more timely delivery and accessible nature. There is consequently significant scope to build on these steps, involving the Technologists, the local Learning Advancement Consultants and DILT, co-operatively devising and delivering a relevant range of integrated developmental initiatives that further broaden and deepen academic staff's learning experiences here.

5.4.2.4 Based on the participants' experiences were there any ways that measures in relation to the above areas could have been enhanced?

Leadership techniques that encompass a high standard of staff communications and methods of consultation are critical when change is being managed. This was seen emerging both from the analysis of the tensions that were identified in section 5.1 and from the relationship of the themed findings to the literature in section 5.2. The launch of the online learning initiative appeared to get the communication process noticeably wrong and very much one way. What is more, there was the absence of a clear vision and a detailed strategy that could allow staff to fully understand the need for the move into online learning, and actively allow for some involvement in its planning, management and implementation. While the launch of the second virtual learning environment did show that some of these lessons in terms of consultation had been learnt and a more robust approach had been adopted with a more settled transition experienced by staff, a detailed strategy for eLearning – and indeed for teaching and learning in general – was still missing and causing frustration.

5.4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE LIGHT OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY

5.4.3.1 Encourage consultation and dialogue

The first recommendation is therefore that the latter form of consultation rather than the former practice should be the accepted practice and built on for any further changes, that the vision for eLearning (online and blended) be refreshed and a comprehensive strategy be developed or form part of a similarly detailed teaching and learning strategy. This would then give an indication to and reassure practitioners of the value and recognition that is still attached to these areas by the University, along with the quality standards that the institution is concerned to uphold. To quote Gunn again, it should present:

> "…a coherent, achievable set of goals with appropriate incentives and rewards. It must also move from the bottom-up where knowledge of teaching strategies, learning contexts and disciplinary expertise can be translated into action plans geared to achievement of institutional strategic objectives and so creating a sense of ownership at all levels of the institution." (Gunn, 1998, p.142)

5.4.3.2 Develop a costing pro-forma for online learning developments

The second recommendation would be one that (as seen from the quotation above) is closely associated with the first one, in that urgent consideration be given to developing and putting into practice a costing pro-forma for the design, development and delivery of online learning modules and courses. This matter was of special concern to participants who are or were academic managers tasked with putting forward budgetary proposals and academic lecturing staff who found themselves unable to cope within their officially allocated hours.

5.4.3.3 Make continuing professional development more attuned to needs and working arrangements

The third recommendation is that greater efforts need to be made to make CPD more attuned to academic staff's wider educational needs and their other everyday pressures. In so doing, this means ensuring that the expertise of the academic developers who form part of DILT have a well defined role to play here and indeed consideration be given to a judicious expansion in their numbers, that strong linkages are made between pedagogical theory and practice and that the crucial skills of design, development and delivering of online learning and that induction into the latter does not just cover the functionality of the virtual learning environment. Furthermore, it involves putting further effort in the developing a menu of accessible and 'digestible' learning experiences at a cross institutional level. This could include the assembly of web-based materials, the showcasing of good examples of work, the creation of self-study kits, the promotion of communities of practice along with personalised help being made by email, via desktop audio/video conference, over the 'phone or through the setting up of drop-in centres.

5.4.3.4 Promote adoption of a holistic approach to continuing professional development

We have witnessed from the review of the literature and reflections captured from the research here the great value placed by academics on School based support and adopting a holistic approach to CPD at this level and the centre. A fourth

recommendation is therefore that DILT staff, the local eLearning support officers and the holders of the (now revised) Learning Advancement Consultant posts should work together to develop and help deliver a network of additional CPD/academic developmental provision attuned to particular curriculum areas but would also inter-connect with generic programmes, support and/or learning objects available from the centre.

5.5 QUESTIONS REMAINING UNANSWERED AND SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.5.1 APPLICATION OF RESEARCH TO eLEARNING IN GENERAL?

In terms of subject matter being investigated, the "parent" of online learning, eLearning (or technology enhanced learning) in all of its manifold applications or permutations was outside the remit of this study although the two are plainly linked. So, the first answered question is whether the above recommendations could just as easily apply to eLearning and in areas that incorporate eLearning and face-to-face teaching (i.e. blended learning) as well?

Incidentally, casual deployment of the term 'eLearning' in Scotia University has posed particular difficulties for research into online or eLearning and I do wonder in retrospect if confusion as to its precise meaning might have coloured participants' responses. For example, the Department of eLearning Advancement which might have led outsiders and new members of staff to imagine was concerned with all things "e" was in fact in practice only involved with online learning. Such casual use is however not confined to just this institution (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2009).

5.5.2 VIEWS OF OTHER STAKEHOLDERS?

Secondly, I was also aware that I was not able to accommodate the subjective experiences of other stakeholders towards the phenomena. For instance, what might have been the attitudes of the learners – including their feelings towards the way that open learning was promoted, their experiences of the virtual learning environment(s), the quality of the open learning courseware, the extent to which their design enabled greater understanding of the subject matters covered and the quality of the

teaching/facilitating skills employed engaged them in the learning process? Also, this study looked in particular at the CPD offered to academics. To what extent were the training needs of other staff adequately addressed during this initiative?

5.5.3 OTHER QUESTIONS

While undertaking this study, there are also a number of other questions have come to the fore in my own mind as topics for further research. This study illustrated feelings of unease as to the economical way that online learning was handled. If online learning was effectively budgeted within the University, is it a cost-effective option? How can a rich diversity of teaching and learning cultures be best accommodated within the moves towards eLearning/technology enhanced forms of learning (including online learning)? What sort of professional qualities are we looking for in academic and academic related staff who deliver CPD and what additional training needs to be offered to those individuals who wish to nurture this change process amongst their colleagues?

5.5 CLOSING STATEMENT

This research addresses one of the main aims for the Doctorate of Education programme at the University of Strathclyde, which is to "demonstrate specialised understanding of an area of professional relevance and interest, by processes of systematic enquiry…" (University of Strathclyde, 2009, p. 5). As such, its findings were always intended to be of practical benefit to concerned parties within Scotia University, hopefully informing the ongoing evaluation and subsequent decision-making processes with regards to such developments and in particular academic staff development strategies for online learning, their design and implementation. Because it has been a phenomenological study applicable to only a time and place it was not investigated in order to generate a general theory. It is only if the reader can find similarities with the identified experiences and themes that have been within their own situation that it will be of wider use. With that in mind, it is intended that the research will be more widely disseminated by way of publication in an established refereed journal as well as in the form of a conference presentation and/or workshop.

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Appendix 1

UNIVERSITY'S LETTER OF CONSENT

[Scotia University]

Mr Geoffrey Goolnik
Xx Xx xxxxxxxx xxx
Xxxxxxxxxx
Xxxxxxxxxx
XXXX XXX

2 December 2004

Dear Mr Goolnik

RESEARCH STUDY

Thank you for your letter of 28 November 2004 in relation to your proposed Research Study.

The topic of the research is of significant interest to the University and I am happy to give you permission to survey a cross section of the University's staff.

As a requirement of the University's co-operation I should be pleased if you would provide the University with a copy of your research, and expressly seek my permission in the event of your intention to publish research which makes direct reference to [University investigated].

Yours sincerely,

[University Secretary]

Appendix 2

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET (2008)

"Ontological Experiences from a University's Change Management of its Online Learning Initiative and Associated Continuing Professional Development Opportunities for Academic Staff"

Researcher: Geoff Goolnik
I am undertaking this study for my Doctor of Education degree at the University of Strathclyde

Introduction to the Research:
Scotia University was one of the first institutions of Higher Education in the UK to establish an online learning provision with the launch in 1999 of our first virtual learning environment, Cyber Study. Since then, it has become an integral and growing part of our offer. Ten years after first getting involved in this area, and after a wide ranging evaluation, we saw Cyber Study retired and replaced by the Cyber Moodle virtual learning environment. This research seeks to explore the insights of those who were (at various starting points) involved with developing and supporting this online revolution and their feelings on the change management processes and infrastructural arrangements that were made.

In particular, I would be very interested in how you felt – your experiences and reflections – concerning amongst other matters the introduction of online learning (or coming across it maybe for the first time when you joined SU), the information offered, the consultation, the academic-related human resources put in place and, critically for this study, the shape and amount of continuing professional development that was on offer? An analysis of your expressed views and implications arising from them will hopefully assist future thinking about the ongoing management of online learning and its appropriate place within the wider area of e- (or technology enhanced) learning.

Your Involvement:
If you agree to be interviewed you will be one 10-14 senior managers, managers, academic and academic related SU staff sharing your experiences with me in an individual interview. I will meet you at a time and place that is convenient to you. About an hour of your time will be needed for me to listen to, and record on an audio cassette recorder, your experiences. Following the data analysis of the transcript of your interview I would supply you with a copy of the transcript and the themes that had been subsequently identified by me as emerging from this. I would then seek a further meeting of approximately 30 minutes to establish that the transcript was accurate, that the assigned themes were recognisable, and whether you had anything further to add.

Confidentiality:
A confidentiality agreement will be signed by the person who transcribes the audio cassette recordings. I will also protect your identity by ensuring that your real name

will not be used on any written documents. A pseudonym will be used instead. Tapes and interview transcripts will be kept locked in a filing cabinet in the researcher's office and destroyed 5 years after completion of the research.

Use of the information:
The information from these interviews will be used in my thesis to be submitted to the University of Strathclyde for my Doctor of Education degree; and for papers published in journals and presentations at research or educational seminars and conferences, arising from this research. The first of these papers/presentations will be emailed to every participant in this study.

Participation:
Reading this information sheet does not commit you to participating in this research. If you do decide to participate, your interview(s) will be tape recorded. You have the right to:

- Ask for the audio cassette recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview
- Decline to answer particular questions
- Ask for the material to be deleted from the word processed copy of the interview

You can withdraw from the study at any time without consequence and you do not have to give any reasons for withdrawing. And you do not have to give any reasons for withdrawing.

Contact:
Should you have any concerns regarding this research study or the manner in which it is conducted, please contact, Geoff Goolnik, the researcher:

- *Telephone:* xxxxx-xxxxxx (Work); xxxxx-xxxxxx (Home)
- *Email:* g.goolnik@su.ac.uk; geoff.goolnik@googlemail.com

Appendix 3

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (2008)

"Ontological Experiences from a University's Change Management of its Online Learning Initiative and Associated Continuing Professional Development Opportunities for Academic Staff"

Researcher: Geoff Goolnik, Doctoral Student of University of Strathclyde / Educational Development Officer, DILT, Scotia University, Scotia City

Contact Information:
Telephone: xxxxx-xxxxxx (Work); xxxxx-xxxxxx (Home)
Email: g.goolnik@su.ac.uk; geoff.goolnik@googlemail.com

……

1. The nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me and I have read and I understand the Information Sheet I have also had an opportunity to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I have the right to ask further questions at any time.

2. I agree to the interviews being audio-taped and transcribed as part of the research, subject to the recording being checked for accuracy by myself. I understand that I have the right to ask for the cassette recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview, that I can decline to answer particular questions, and that I can ask for the material to be deleted from the word processed copy of the interview. The audio cassette recordings and transcripts will be locked in a filing cabinet in the researcher's office and destroyed 5 years after completion of the research

3. I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that this information is confidential, that my real name will not be used on any documents and that a pseudonym will be substituted instead. I understand that the information I provide will be used for this research, and for papers published in journals and presentations at research or educational seminars and conferences, arising from this research.

4. I agree to participate in this study and give my consent freely. I understand that the study will be carried out as described in the information sheet, a copy of which I have retained. I realise that whether or not I decide to participate is my decision. I also realise that I can withdraw from the study at any time and that I do not have to give any reasons for withdrawing.

Signatures: …… Date: ……

Researcher: …… Date: ……

Appendix 4

INTERVIEW QUESTION BANK

For **University senior executives, academic senior** + **middle managerial** participants, the interview questions were selected from:

- Can you describe how you feel about online learning as a means of delivery?
- What do/did you feel about the University's involvement with online learning?
- Can you describe the University's change management process?
- How did/do you see your own role with respect to online learning?
- How did you as a manager decide to go about handling this?
- How do you feel about the support that has been offered in terms of Continuing Professional Development?
- What did you perceive was the attitude towards online learning held by those for whom you were responsible for and what was your perception of others outwith your area of responsibility?
- What do you feel have been the positive /negative experiences in this area?

For **academic lecturing staff (Lecturer / Senior Lecturer)** participants, the interview questions were selected from:

- Can you describe how you feel about online learning as a means of delivery?
- What do/did you feel about the University's involvement with online Learning process?
- What do you feel about the University's attitude to online learning?
- Can you tell me your attitude towards any reward and recognition for staff involved with online learning?
- How did/do you personally feel about incorporating online learning into your teaching? How has it affected your work experience?
- How have you found the design and developmental practices for

online learning within your School and the University generally?

- How have you got on using the University's virtual learning environment(s)?
- Can you describe your experiences concerning the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) on offer for online learning and the support informally provided?
- What did you feel was the most useful CPD experiences here?

For **academic related staff participants**, the interview questions were selected from:

- Can you describe how you feel about online learning as a means of delivery?
- How did/do you see as your own role with respect to your online learning responsibilities?
- How do you feel about the University's and your own School's change management process?
- What do you feel about the support structure for online learning centrally and locally?
- Do you feel that the University has shown a continuing commitment to online learning?
- In what ways, do you feel that online learning can be best supported throughout the University?
- How have you felt about the University's virtual learning environment(s)?
- In your experience, how has CPD been most effectively delivered?

Appendix 5

LIST OF EVIDENCED PARTICIPANTS

University Senior Executive – Vice Principal (VP)

- Morgan^

Academic Senior Manager – Dean of Faculty (D):

- Donna**

Academic Middle Managers – Heads of School (HoS):

- Dirk*
- Gwen**
- Harry^
- Lou^

Academic Lecturing Staff :

- Senior Lecturers (SL):
  - Juliette*
  - Suzanne**
  - Tim**
- Lecturers (L):
  - Ashley*
  - Lucy*
  - Rebecca*

Academic Related Staff:

- Central eLearning managers (eLM)
  - Simon**
  - Thomas**
- School eLearning Technologist (eLT)
  - Harriet*

^ Interviewed in 2005 only

** interviewed in 2005 & 2008

*interviewed in 2008 only

Appendix 6

FIELD NOTES

a) PRECONCEPTIONS

N.B. To avoid unnecessary repetition please see remarks as finally entered in Chapter 3, section 4.1

b) EXAMPLES OF PARTICIPANT ANALYSIS ENTRIES

Ashley (Lecturer) Significant Extracts from Field Notes

Interview conducted: 24th. September 2008, started 10.35am, ended 11.45am.

Cyber Study: Decisions made by SMT – hadn't initiated any widespread consultation. This was not unexpected with Morgan driving it through. [*GMG: Views tie in with Thomas' reflections but at odds though with Lucy and Simon's feelings*]. A. felt "disenfranchised" and "lack of consultation". Also, CDOL had adopted a distant approach: didn't even know who to contact if help was required! It was a frustrating experience. [*Integrated into eventual 'Planning and leadership for change: Dialogue: Little consultation' sub-theme*].

SMT were not forward looking with regards to online learning – they were reacting all the time. They were getting lost, with decisions showing no sense of real vision. He wanted a "beacon" but there wasn't one. [*GMG: A. showed concern*]. [*GMG: Suzanne's , Simon's and Juliette's views were similar*]. [*Integrated into eventual 'Planning and leadership for change: Policies: eLearning and guidelines lacking' sub-theme*]. Could the University in fact afford the initiative? [*Integrated into eventual 'Planning and leadership for change: Policies: Costing model not developed' sub-theme*]

Introduction of Uni Moodle was much better handled. [*GMG: A. appeared thankful*] although he felt that others might have thought that there was still room for improvement. [*Integrated into eventual 'Planning and leadership for change: Dialogue: Improved consultation with Uni Moodle' sub-theme*].

New environment offered great functionality/ownership [*GMG: A. appeared pleased*] and the features, if appropriately incorporated into learning materials, would boost the University's reputation in this area. [*Integrated into eventual 'Systems Operations for Change: Uni Moodle Virtual Learning Environment: Versatile and likeable' sub-theme*]. Like Juliette, A. agreed that lack of time was unfortunately holding back colleagues. If only more of it was available A. felt that more colleagues would then become interested in creating engaging learning experiences. [*Integrated into eventual 'Systems Operations for Change: Uni Moodle VLE: Sound utilisation still varies' sub-theme*]. [*GMG: I wonder though if things other than online learning would fill any such emerging voids? Wouldn't still be a juggling of priorities?*].

A. was annoyed that too much emphasis was being placed by SMT on the technology of online learning. Led by those showing a "religious zeal" [GMG*: dramatic description – Rebecca also used the same term*]. [*Integrated into eventual 'Preparing staff for change: Building online competencies: Attitudes to online teaching – academic concerns' sub-theme*]. He felt that it was a mistake. The University has first got to think about what is appropriate pedagogically. Academics needed to be shown how they could create appealing interactive learning. A. was frustrated when he saw what others were doing elsewhere in other institutions. [*Integrated into eventual 'Preparing staff for change: Building online competencies: Induction into online teaching – emphasis on technology' sub-theme*]. [*GMG: Such a view seemingly connected with the views of other participants', viz. Harry's, Suzanne's, Lou's, Juliette's, Lucy's, Harriet's, Rebecca's and Dirk's views about missing pedagogical elements in the inductive training. What was CDOL and is DeLA up to here?*].

CPD: While A. felt that the emphasis might be best on just-in-time, accessible opportunities in a diverse range of formats when it's really needed, [*GMG: A. held a similar attitude to that of Dirk, Rebecca, Lou, Harry, Lucy, Suzanne, Donna, Harriet and Simon*], he agreed that there was however still a place for longer traditional training where this was appropriate. One feature to be included in any CPD should be a showcase of good practice with examples from those already made across the University. A. felt that objects included here could offer inspiration to others. It could spark off further reflection and translation to their work situations. [*Integrated into eventual 'Preparing staff for change: Building online competencies: Make continuing professional development more accessible' sub-theme*].

A. was also very enthusiastic about self-help groups of staff (or 'communities of practice'). They make networking easier. He gave an example of one operating in own School. Members helped each other and so it became an active learning experience. [*Integrated into eventual 'Preparing staff for change: Providing new roles for change: Value of networking and communities of practice' sub-theme*].

<u>General remarks</u>:
A. is keenly committed to maintaining professional standards and respected as a reflective practitioner. He was very taken with the idea that my research study could enlighten colleagues as to the experiences that had been undergone. A. had not been happy with SMT and CDOL's attitudes back in 2005, and three years on, he still thought that SMT was rather confused as what they hoped to achieve with online learning. Unless there was some tightening up, A. was as a result doubtful as to whether higher quality standards could really be achieved. Even though the Uni Moodle platform offers more ownership and facilities costing or resourcing issues have still not been tackled. In order to address time constraints, it was vital too that CPD in this area should be re-designed to accommodate a more reactive, complete, accessible and – where/when appropriate – an often engaging community based provision.

Suzanne (Senior Lecturer) Significant Extracts from Field Notes

Interview conducted: 17th. September 2008, started 10.05am, ended 11.10am.

S. confirmed her (2005) opinion that the online initiative in her experience was not well thought through by SMT beforehand: She had been "unnerved". The University had the platform, so go for it. *[GMG: Similar to Thomas's remarks*]. [*Integrated into eventual 'Scarcity of vision' sub-theme*]. S. expressed strong concern about continuing lack of well developed guidelines. [*Integrated into eventual 'Policies: lack of strategy and guidelines' sub-theme*]. [*GMG: Why didn't/doesn't SMT listen to Schools' needs too? Builds on what Rebecca and Simon were saying too!*].

SMT has really confused the situation. What do they really want? [*GMG: Again, this reinforces S's 2005 comments*]. The emphasis on the quantity and quality of research in the lead-up to the RAE certainly left staff thinking that teaching was now less of a concern. There wasn't any financial reward or advancement to otherwise encourage and reassure staff to feel that online teaching was still of great importance to the University. [*GMG: Harry and Thomas were of a similar opinion*]. [*Integrated into eventual 'Planning and leadership for change: Policies: eLearning strategy and guidelines lacking' sub-theme*].

Current state of play regarding Cyber Study: [*GMG: S. grimaced*]. The Cyber Study platform really creaks along. [*Integrated into eventual 'Systems Operations for change: Cyber Study VLE: Publicly embarrassing' sub theme*]. Online learning needed more investment. In general, online learning at this time was in a sorry state.

Please let Uni Moodle work better! Reassured by what she has seen so far. [*Integrated into eventual 'Systems operations for change: Uni Moodle VLE: Versatile and likeable' sub-theme***].** However, it was going to be somewhat challenging to fully exploit new opportunities offered within the Uni Moodle virtual learning environment. However, would academic staff have the will to successfully engage? Cultural traditions relating to teaching face-to-face might have held some colleagues back as they are held in high regard! Also, facilitating online is not so straight-forward. Opportunities for Online learning – addresses many needs of society but can the University now successfully go for it? S. hoped so. [*Integrated into eventual 'Preparing Academic Staff for Change: Building online competencies: Attitudes to online teaching – academic concerns' sub-theme*].

There was a definite need for CPD here but there was still a total stress on the technology during the induction. [*Integrated into eventual 'Preparing academic staff for change: Building online competencies: Induction into online teaching – emphasis on technology' sub-theme*]. DILT still hasn't learnt its lesson. [*GMG: S. appeared annoyed*]. It was a repeat of the first VLE launch [*and of her 2005 remarks again*]. In those days CDOL was very aloof and technology centred anyway ☹. [*GMG: S. sighed. It confirms Thomas' observations on this matter*]. [*Integrated into eventual 'Preparing academic staff for change: Providing New Roles for Change: Support from centre not held in high regard' sub theme*]

S. also felt that academic staff in general didn't have enough time for in-depth CPD. [*GMG: Lou and Harry in agreement*]. [*Integrated into eventual 'Preparing academic staff for change: Building online competencies: Other pressures on time restricts access to continuing professional development' sub-theme*]. Opportunities had to be created that adequately addressed these real-world pressures. Byte sized opportunities needed to be provided here along with traditional provision. [*Integrated into eventual 'Preparing academic staff for change: Building online competencies: Make continuing professional development more accessible' sub-theme*].

Local Support: eLTs have been of significant help. [*GMG: S. therefore in agreement with number of other participants – Donna, Dirk, Juliette, Lucy, Harriet, Rebecca*]. DILT too improving now as well [*GMG: S. smiled*]. If only the role and duties of LACs had been properly "thought through". It had been personally disappointing. S. had tried to actively play her part in this initiative but how many of the others did? (GMG: S. seemed to think that a number didn't). Opportunity to contextualise parallel pattern of pedagogical support with LACs was initially missed out on. [*Integrated eventually into 'Preparing academic staff for change: Providing new roles for change: Support from eLTs highly praised' sub-theme*].

General remarks:
A pretty frank and honest input from S. She had been very willing to be involved in the research study. However, although she tried to be as open as possible as a colleague, I could see there were occasions in our interviews when didn't want to be drawn too much on the inner workings/decision making of her own School. As in 2005, S. remained most concerned about the way Senior Managers have led the University down an ill informed path regarding Cyber Study. The University had lost out as a consequence. S. is well informed about ways to integrate eLearning in the curriculum and needs to be listened to. Maybe there will be improvements now with Uni Moodle? She wasn't sure as yet because she felt that it could be challenging for colleagues. CPD for such an initiative therefore had to reflect the real world situation of practitioners, meeting academics' need to prepare and implement engaging designs rather than what DILT had pre-determined they would require. The localised learning technology support that Schools had now opted for at least many Schools, she felt, could address some of these issues directly.

Dirk (Head of School) Significant Extracts from Field Notes

Interview conducted: 15th. October 2008, started 2.30pm, ended 3.30 pm.

Introduction of Online Learning: Looking back, it seemed to D. [*as with Suzanne*] that the existence of the platform was the main driver for the development with concerns about particular quality of the learner experience being delivered by this means going unacknowledged. [*Integrated into eventual 'Planning and leadership for change: Policies: Scarcity of vision' sub-theme*]. Like others [*Lucy, Simon, Suzanne, Rebecca, Ashley, Juliette*], D. admitted to being confused and bewildered. He would have liked to have said that he was consulted but he wasn't ☹. [GMG: D.

gave a wry smile]. In difficult position to explain in turn to his School staff. He gradually acquired an appreciation of online learning the hard way over time. [*Integrated into eventual 'Planning and leadership for change: Dialogue: Little consultation' sub-theme*].

D. was very troubled that the initiative also apparently relied on a considerably amount of academic staff goodwill [*GMG: View was similar to Thomas's*] and proceeded regardless too of the crude, sorry state of the administrative arrangements – that very possibly left a negative impression with the academic staff as to the importance of online learning vis-à-vis research and with would-be and existing online students. [*GMG: A. was also very troubled. Donna held a similar view*]. [*Integrated into eventual 'Planning and leadership for change: Policies: Costing model not developed' sub-theme*].

There was a need to come up with possible solutions: For instance, D. had appointed Online Teaching Assistants in his School. [*GMG: He was rather defensive and sensitive about this matter*]. The Assistants were not on same grades as Lecturers but the aim was to concentrate on online modules and take away pressure from Lecturers. [*GMG: Juliette and Rebecca were worried that the move in fact signalled a threat to quality assurance and jobs*]. [*Integrated into eventual 'Planning and leadership for change: Policies: Costing model not developed' sub-theme*].

D. felt that an evaluation of the Cyber Study platform should have come about sooner. When, in the early 2000s D. saw others' VLEs in operation it immediately struck him that Cyber Study had now fallen so far behind it was in great danger of giving the University a poor and quite embarrassing representation. It was quite obvious that there was a need to ditch Cyber Study. [*GMG: D.*'s *opinion matched Donna's and Tim's here*]. However, Morgan was very protective. [*Integrated into eventual 'Systems operations for change: Cyber Study virtual learning environment: Publicly embarrassing' sub-theme*]

Introduction of Uni Moodle: Improved consultation was apparent and impressive – opinions emanating from the first stage of the initiative had seemingly been listened to. [*Integrated into eventual 'Planning and leadership for change Dialogue: Improved consultation with Uni Moodle' sub-theme*]. On other hand, D. was wary about the University making the wrong choice of second generation VLE. Would he and his staff accept it as a step forward? Would it affect School's provision in negative way? Now he was reassured. [*Integrated into eventual 'Systems Operations for change: Uni Moodle virtual learning environment: versatile and likeable' sub-theme*]. However, although there had been an improvement in the quality of some courses D. detected some amount of "window dressing". Was this by intent or still lack of understanding? [*GMG: If it was a lack of understanding could it be linked to inappropriate CPD – see below*]. [*Integrated into eventual 'Systems Operations for change: Uni Moodle virtual learning environment: Sound utilisation still varies' sub-theme*]. D. detected drift at the top of the University and through its pronouncements. *[GMG: noted sorrow in D.'s voice]*. This was not good for the future. [*GMG: Similar to Suzanne's reflected comment*]. *[Integrated into eventual 'Planning and leadership for change: Policies: eLearning strategy and guidelines lacking'*].

CPD: As in the earlier initiative, the University was – within its inductive CPD programme to Uni Moodle – still neglecting how best to integrate good educational design and practice. [*GMG: D. appeared to hold similar views to Harry, Suzanne, Lou, Juliette, Lucy, Harriet, Rebecca and Ashley*]. [*Integrated into eventual 'Preparing academic staff for change: Building online competencies: Induction to online teaching – emphasis on technology' sub-theme*]. [*GMG: D. appeared upset*]. Addressing this issue was essential as part of the human investment here. D. appreciated the pressures that DILT were under, but he was disappointed that they showed no real interest in tackling the issue of a balanced CPD programme from the start.

Shape and timing of the CPD offered needed attention too. There was a need to contextualise such support in order to make it more relevant and applicable. As a Head of School, D. also had to grapple with limited resources and so he couldn't afford to release his staff as much as he and they would like. Byte-sized opportunities suited such needs better. [*Integrated into eventual 'Preparing academic staff for change: Building online competencies: make continuing professional development more accessible' sub-theme*].

D. seized the opportunity to appoint an eLearning Technologist. Under the old system, dealing with DeLA lead to so much delay. [*Integrated into eventual 'Support from the centre not held in high regard'*]. At least contextualised help was now directly at hand [*GMG: This fitted in with the feelings of Donna, Suzanne, Juliette, Lucy, Harriet, Rebecca*] even if the individuals concerned weren't necessarily skilled in terms of pedagogical design and development. [*Integrated into eventual 'Preparing academic staff for change: Providing new roles for change: Support from eLTs highly praised' sub-theme*].

<u>General remarks</u>:
This was the first of my interviews with a manager this time around. What was it about the situation and sitting talking to me that meant D. appeared hesitant in sharing all of his experiences regarding the topics? As I attempted to establish my status as an independent researcher the unintended end result may have been that Dirk saw me more as an outsider rather than as a colleague.

D. was very concerned about the quality of the online learning initiative and SMT's rather autocratic, non inclusive manner. He had tried to be supportive of his staff's interests but Morgan proved to be something of a barrier to making any improvements. The change-over to a new VLE, following the departure of Morgan and subsequent evaluation, was assisted by a much more consultative approach, although there was still some evidence of poor practice. With CPD, D. was also obviously worried that his staff weren't getting sufficient assistance in terms of designing for learning from DILT. At least, at a local level, eLTs have been able to offer much more contextualised technological support than had previously been possible from the centre.

EXAMPLE OF OVERALL DATA ANALYSIS SEQUENCE

8th. December 2008

I've just started to try and arrive at the initial sub-themes for my data. I am though starting to see problems. One of them is a sub-theme of "lack of commitment". I'm wondering if this is too broad at this stage. It can relate to too many things. Thank goodness for NVivo though ☺. It's not a great learning curve and makes the prospect of this phase of the data analysis relatively less daunting than with my previous experiences. I must leave myself open to various interpretations (even though I'm aware of the prejudices that I bring to areas of this research investigation!).

14th. December 2008

It's strange yet true of the guides I've read how reading and re-reading transcripts really does uncover fresh meaning from underneath the surface which at first glance you didn't see. For instance, I didn't initially give much thought or highlight Lou's point that the very term "online learning" (rather than teaching) may well project a view to some that online materials could be rather transmissively provided without a facilitator there encouraging an active engagement with them. It certainly does underline Max van Manen's remark about theme isolation being a "creative hermeneutic process" (1990, p. 96).

16th. December 2008

I came to Thomas's transcript to-day. I was quite frustrated with him at the time because I felt that I didn't get much relevant data from him during the interview. He appeared to be meandering. Now, I'm transcribing the data as a research analyst, I'm seeing that he did express some interesting perceptions on things, particularly on the way SMT appeared to jump right into the initiative without it would seem a clear vision. It seems to confirm what Dirk, Harry, Suzanne, Lou, Juliette, Lucy, Harriet, Rebecca and Ashley have said about feeling about how with CPD there was little appreciation of educational quality issues as against using the technology that was in place.

20th. December 2008

Yes, in the light of what I can see Gwen is saying about numbers being in her mind of utmost importance ties in with Thomas's and Dirk's remarks. Suzanne also confirms Thomas's point about she saw as a lack of market research. "Scarcity of vision" emerges as an evident sub-theme in those early days. I settle for that. Seems to link in with what Dirk was also saying about SMT had not come out with any quality guidelines for a number of years and when they did emerge they were light on detailed advice. However, I think it should be separate sub-theme although come under an umbrella heading.

22nd. December 2008

Confusion and bewilderment seemed to be a common reaction amongst those participants who were around then! It appears to pervade quite a number of issues across this study. I get the feeling though that SMT is now trying harder – thanks to a new generally more enlightened and conciliatory team being in post (e.g. more consultation). Yet research v. teaching v. limited time for anything(!) is causing a strain. Previous leadership appeared to have acted as a barrier to change. However, they still need to home in on a clear strategy and think particularly think about quality and administrative issues. As Ashley put it, showing some concern, "that 'beacon' is not obvious." (I must include this within the text!).