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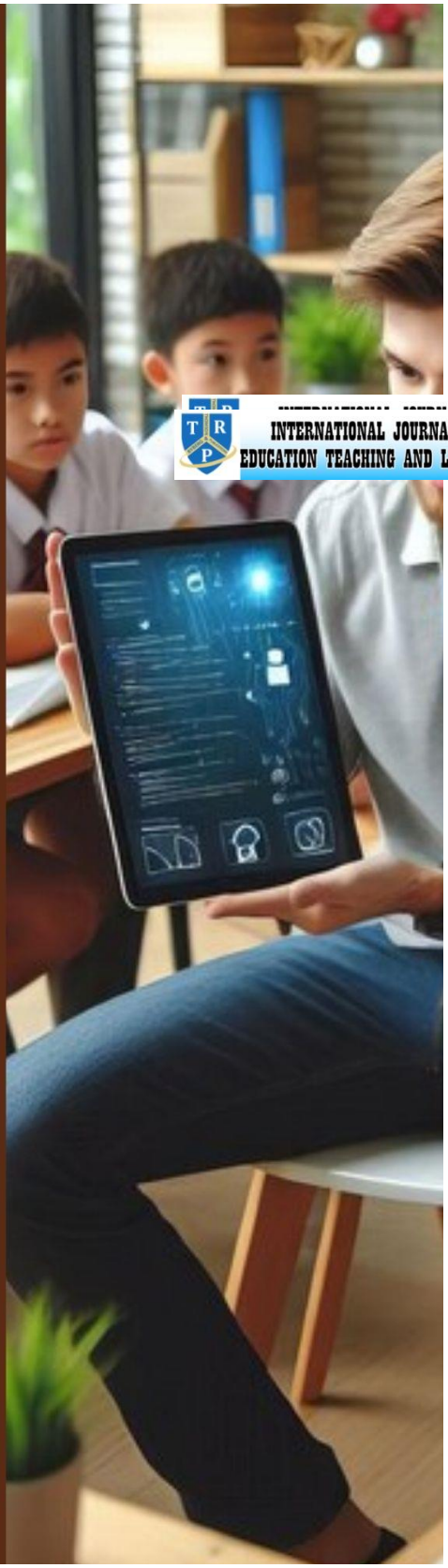

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Freeing the chi of change: The Higher Education Academy and enhancing teaching and learning in higher education

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This article takes a look at some of the new policies enacted in the United Kingdom with the goal of improving the quality of higher education there and the way students study. Both the Higher Education Bill (2004) and the Higher Education Academy's efforts in this field are very new. Therefore, it is very appropriate to conduct a retrospective of past efforts. While other levels of study have dealt with these attempts head-on, the essay demonstrates that the meso level, which is crucial, has been neglected. On the other hand, many theories of change and development have provided the foundation for these interventions. The concept of the reflective practitioner is central to one dominant paradigm; this theory focusses on the micro (person) level of analysis. As agents of change, it views reflective practitioners. Another is associated with learning organisation theory, which takes a macro view and attributes change to changes in the norms, beliefs, and practices of an organisation. One more holds that the field itself is the most important unit of study for bringing about transformation, and it is founded on the idea of epistemological determinism. Other policies in higher education coexist with the ones already listed; they may not be directly related to improving instruction, but they still have a substantial impact on the field via a patchwork of unrelated tactics and implicit assumptions. Particularly pertinent here are policies concerning funding, research, and expanding involvement, all of which are being put into place within a more managerialist setting characterised by an increase in workload and a decrease in available resources. Consistency between the policies and the ideas that underpin them throughout the many levels of analysis is absent from all of this. The higher education programs implemented by different government and non-government organisations have often worked against one another due to their lack of cohesion. This leads us to our choice of an Eastern philosophical metaphor: the idea of blocked chi. At the departmental level, which is the meso level of analysis, there is also a lack of a strong theory of change and related policies. Our goal is to liberate the "chi of change" by proposing solutions to the second omission.

Introduction

> Chibringsgoodfortuneintheformofphysicalenergy,relationshipaffinityandmaterialprosperity…Ifchiisnotallowedtoflowfreely…thenitstagnatesandtransformsintodestructive energy, known as sha chi … Chi is said to gently flow along curved lineswhile the 'doom laden' sha chi strikes like a 'secret arrow' along straight lines. (Dee,1999, p.8)

This article examines the main UK policy initiatives directed at the teaching functionwithin British universities in recent years. It concentrates on 'post-Dearing' initia-tives, identifying strategic and theoretical weaknesses that have hindered the progressof change. Dearing was commissioned to outline a long-term national strategy forhighereducationinthetwenty-firstcentury,andreportedtothegovernmentthroughthe National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE) in 1997. Itsrecommendations, operationalized through a number of funding initiatives, haveshapednewapproachestoteaching,learningandresearchacrosstheUKuniversitysector.

Thearticlequestionstheappropriatenessofthestrategiesadoptedbygovernmentinpursuitofitsaimsfortheenhancementofteachingandresearchqualityin Britishuniversities. It argues that the change strategy adopted has resulted in only partialeffectiveness for three main reasons. First, there were absences and incoherencewithinthelevelsofanalysischosenforinitiativestopromotechange,withclearg apsat the 'meso' level of the departmental community—what Becher and Kogan call the'basic unit' (Becher & Kogan, 1992). Second, the funding initiatives are underpinnedbyinadequatetacittheoriesofchange.Third,theseinitiativesexistinapolicy environmentredolentwithpolicyparadoxes(Gleeson,1989),whichservetoundermine their effect. There is, in short, a lack of 'joined-up thinking' in any fundamental sense(McCormick&Leicester, 1999).

The article seeks to contribute to the present debate on teaching, learning andresearchinhighereducationwithreferencetotheBritishgovernment'slatestinitiativetosetupaneworganization,theHigherEducationAcademy,tosupportcurric-ulum and pedagogical development. We start with a brief survey of the UK universitysector in the 'post-Dearing' area, in order to contextualize the change initiativesunderscrutinyin thisarticle.

Thedevelopmentofgovernmentteachingenhancementinitiativespost-Dearing

The report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (oftenknownastheDearingReport)in1997heraldedanumberofchangesintheEnglishfunding council's approach to teaching and learning. The Learning and TeachingStandingCommitteeoftheHigherEducationFundingCouncilforEnglandwassetupfollowingthepublicationofthereportto'advisethefundingcouncilondevelopingalearningandteachingstrategyandthefundingmechanismstodothis'.Thesixkeyissuesidentifiedbythecommitteewere:

1. Raisingtheprofileoflearningandteachinginhighereducation
2. Enhancingpublicconfidenceinthequalityoflearningandteachinginhighereducation
3. Enhancingthequalityoflearningandteaching
4. Respondingtoglobalcompetition
5. Promotingtheefficientandeffectiveuseofresources
6. Encouragingresearchtosupportlearningandteachinginhighereducation(HEFCE, 1998).

The 1998 strategy and funding proposals document recognized what had been apparenttopractitionersforsometime,thattherewere'Manyagencies,institution,individuals, initiatives and programmes … concerned with improving the quality oflearning and teaching. There [was] competition, duplication and lack of co-ordinationand coherence between initiatives'. In addition, it recognized that some initiatives hadprovedineffectual:'Forexample,itisnotyetclearthattheoutcomesoftheFundfortheDevelopmentofTeachingandLearning(FDTL)andtheUK-wideTeachingandLearning Technology Programme (TLTP) have been widely understood and adoptedbythosewho mightbenefit fromthem' (HEFCE1998, p.3).

The1998consultationdocumentproposedanewintegratedapproachtothefunding of improvements in teaching quality: the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund(TQEF). The TQEF would provide funding at three levels: the institution, theacademic subject and the individual. The HEFCE annual conference in 1998 indicated a preference for funding for 'excellence and enhancement through biddingschemes,ratherthanbyformula'.Thiswasincontrasttotheoft-heardcomplaintof'bidding fatigue' and probably indicated a fear of teaching enhancement fundingbeingabsorbedintothemainteachinggrant,ratherthanadesiretocontinuecompetition between institutions. Initially it was proposed that funding at the institutionallevel would be for additional student numbers only, but the April 1999 (HEFCE1999a)announcementofthefundingcouncil'sstrategy,followingconsultationwith the sector, included funding to support institutional learning, teaching and assessmentstrategies.HEFCEannouncedfivemainpurposesfortheirlearningandteachingstrategy :

1. Encouragementandreward
2. Coordinationandcollaboration
3. Disseminatingandembeddinggoodpractice
4. Researchandinnovation
5. Buildingcapacityforchange.

Institution-level funding would provide support for the implementation of institutional learning, teaching and assessment strategies. Funding would be done byformula,basedonstudentnumbers.Thetotalamountprovidedforthisleveloffunding was just over £48 million for the three-year period 1999-2002. A similar sum wasdistributed in 2002 for the following three-year period. An analysis of institutionalstrategiesundertakenbytheNationalCoordinationTeamin2003(Gibbs ,2003)

suggestedthatthechangeoffundingapproachhadresultedininstitutionsbecomingmore strategic in their approach to teaching enhancement, and integrating teachingstrategiesratherbetterwithotherinstitutionalstrategies(suchasestatesandwidening-participation),thatteachingandlearningstrategieswerebecomingmoreembed-ded within institutions, and that evaluation of teaching enhancement had becomemoreapparent.

The analysis also noted that 'externally driven curriculum change, especially inresponse to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) requirementsand initiatives, has emerged as a major focus for many institutional strategies. Manyinstitutions and much activity is centred on the move to programme specifications,outcome-based curricula and the development of generic and key skills within curric-ula at different levels' (Gibbs, 2003, p. 3). Revision of assessment approaches alsofeatured widely in the published strategies. Particular areas of emphasis had emerged:supporting 'widening participation' students; changing curricula to develop genericlearning outcomes and student employability; a shift in emphasis from teaching tolearning; greater elaboration of the links between research and teaching; informationtechnologyinfrastructureande-learning.

Funding at the subject level was focused on the creation of the Learning andTeaching Support Network (LTSN) of 24 subject centres and a generic centre, andon the continuation of the FDTL. The latter was something of a hangover from aprevious approach to supporting developments at the level of the discipline, withphasesoffundingrelatingtoroundsofQAAsubjectreviews.TheinterimevaluationoftheLTSNconcludedthat,whilstthesubjectcentreswere'startingtobeperceivedas key players within their respective subject communities', 'ways need to be found toconnect the work of the LTSN to sustainable change at various levels—the institu-tion, faculty and departments—change motivated by national policy as well as bylocalneeds'(HEFCE2002,p.18)Clearly,thegoalofintegratingchangeprocesseshadyetto beachieved.

Funding at the level of the individual was focused particularly on the creation of theNational Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS), which awarded three-year fellowshipsworth£50,000to'excellent'highereducationteachers,thefirstawardsbeingmade in July 1999. However, institutions were also encouraged to recognize andreward individual teaching excellence, both through learning, teaching and assess-ment strategy funding and through HEFCE's human resources strategy initiative(HEFCE, 2001). Twenty higher education teachers per year were made NationalTeachingFellowsbetween1999and2003.Despitemuchlobbyingtoallowteamsofstaff to be given awards, the funding council has continued to insist that only individ-uals can be rewarded in this way, a position that appears to run counter to the encour-agement in other areas of their strategy to encourage collaboration and sharing ofpractice.

ThecreationoftheInstituteforLearningandTeaching(InstituteforLearningandTeaching in Higher Education [ILTHE] from 2002) was a direct result of the Dear-ing Report of 1997, which indicated that there should be proper, accredited educationalprogrammesforuniversityteachersasforotherprofessions.However,thiswas

notanewideasincetheAssociationofUniversityTeachers(AUT)hadthemselvesbeen calling for appropriate preparation for teaching since 1995 (AUT, 1996). TheILTHE was to be the professional body that would provide accreditation (eitherdirectlyorthrougheducationalprogrammes)andthebenefitsofaprofessionalass o-ciation for individuals who taught within the higher education system. WhilstHEFCEfundingunderwroteitssettingup,itwasalwaysintendedasaself-determin-ing, membership-owned organization funded by subscription rather than an instru-ment of government policy. Between 1998 and 2004, the ILTHE carried out itsmission alongside the Staff and Educational Development Agency (SEDA), whichhadbeenfoundedin1993toundertakesimilareducationalactivitiesamongsthighe reducationteachers.EarlyversionsofthevisionfortheILTHEincludedmanyofthefuncti onswhichwereintheeventtakenonbytheLTSNsubjectandgenericcentres,such as the creation and support of debates about teaching issues, the provision ofresourcesandprofessionaladviceandsoon.

ThepublicationinJanuary2003ofthegovernmentWhitePaperonhighereduca-tion(*Thefutureofhighereducation*[DepartmentforEducationandSkills,2003])indi-catedsomechangesinthinkingaboutthefundingofteachingandlearningdevelopment.T herewasnomentionofcontinuingsupportforinstitutionalteachingandlearningstrategie s,anditislikelythatfundingforthisareawillbediscontinuedoratbestsubsumedintothege neralteachinggrant,withfundsspecificallydirected towards the new Centresfor Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) describedintheWhitePaper,whosemainobjectivesforthefundingare:

a. Torewardpracticethatdemonstratesexcellentlearningoutcomesforstudents.

b. To enable practitioners to lead and embed change by implementing approaches thataddress the diversity of learners' needs, the requirements of different learning contexts, thepossibilitiesforinnovationandtheexpectationsofemployersandothersconcernedwiththe quality of student learning.

c. To enable institutions to support and develop practice that encourages deeper under-standingacrossthesectorofwaysofaddressingstudents'learningeffectively.

d. Torecognizeandgivegreaterprominencetoclustersofexcellencethatarecapableofinfluen cing practice and raising the profile of teaching excellence within and beyond theirinstitutions.

e. Todemonstratecollaborationandsharingofgoodpracticeandsoenhancethestandardoftea chingandeffective learningthroughoutthe sector.

f. Toraisestudentawarenessofeffectivenessinteachingandlearninginordertoinformstudent choiceandmaximizestudentperformance.(HEFCE,2004,p.4)

SomeoftheseobjectivesechothoseoftheNTFS,andthecreationofCETLsmightbe seen as a response to the demand to recognize and reward groups and teams ofteachers.Theuseoftheterm'beacons'ofgoodteachingintheoriginalconsultationdocu mentwasdroppedaftertheconsultationprocesshadtakenplace.Doubtlessthiswas in response to a general feeling that 'beacon' status for schools has not beenperceivedasagreatsuccess.Thereremainssomeambiguityabouttherelationship

between these CETLs and the LTSN subject centres, although the intention seemsto be that the subject centres have the main responsibility to undertake the dissemi-nationofthepractices developedbythe CETLs.

ThecreationofaHigherEducationAcademyintheWhitePaperappearstobeanattempt to pull some of the separate parts of the previous strategy together. The Acad-emy will include the LTSN and the ILTHE, establish new standards for the educa-tion and accreditation of higher education teachers and administer the NTFS. TheAcademy will also take on some of the wide-reaching functions of the Higher Educa-tionStaffDevelopmentAgency(HESDA),abodyfundedbyinstitutionalsubscrip-tion.HESDA(previouslytheUniversitiesandCollegesStaffDevelopmentAgency,and before that the Universities Staff Development Unit) has had a remit for teachingqualityenhancementcoveringstaffdevelopmentforallcategoriesofstaff,including academicdevelopment,althoughthiswasnotitscorefunction.Mostimportantly(interms of promotion of good teaching) it had the contract for the training of QAAsubjectassessorsandinstitutionalauditors.

At the individual level the NTFS is to be expanded to create 30 experienced fellowsper year, with two additional categories of 'rising star' and learning support staff offer-ing20moreawards.Itisevidentfromthisincreasethatrecognizingandrewardingteachers in higher education is seen as a key element in the strategy to improve teach-inginthesectorandimprovetheprofileofteachingandlearning.

At the time of writing (June 2004), it is not possible to pre-empt the outcomes ofimplementing this new initiative, or to speculate on the extent of the benefits thatmight be reaped by the academic community from the new emphasis at the meso levelbrought about by the CETLs. Proposed changes at the individual level tend to rein-forcepreviouspatterns,whilechangesaffectingfundingattheinstitutionallevelarenotyetfull yformulated.

We argue here that there are three fundamental problems underlying this history ofthepolicythrusttowardsenhancingteachingandlearninginhighereducation.First,althoug h they address different levels of analysis in the higher education system, theydo so in an incoherent and incomplete way. Second, the initiatives are underpinnedby tacit and poorly thought-out and differing theories of change. Third, these policiesare formulated and implemented in the context of the implementation of other highereducationpolicieswhichareincompatiblewiththem,creatinganincoherent'policybu ndle'. To use the metaphor of our title, we argue that taken together these threefactors represent blockages to the 'chi of change'. We will elaborate each of thesethreeblockages inturn.

Underlyingtheoriesofchange

One important strand of policy at the micro level aimed at enhancing teaching,learningandthestudentexperienceistheaccreditationofcoursesbytheILTHEfor' warranting'newlecturers.Thegovernmentexpectsnewlecturerstobecomequali-fiedhighereducationteachers,althoughitisnotyetquiteclearwhetherthisisgoingtobea mandatoryconditionof employment.

Likeallpolicies,thisoneisbuiltonacausaltheoryofchange.Theoriesunderpinningchangeinitiativesararelyexplicit,fullyformedorarguedout,andthisoneisnoexception.Thetacitassumptionisthatwherenovicelecturersundertakeeducationdevelopmentcoursestheywillbecomereflectivepractitioners,andsubsequentlyactasinnovators,primaryadoptersorsourcesof'contagion',bringingimprovedperspectivesandapproachestoteachingbacktotheirdepartments,wheretheyarediffused.Theuniversalaccreditationpolicypresupposesthat,whenitisinplace,newgenerationsofbettertrainedlecturerswill,inthesameway,graduallyimproveteachingandlearningandthequalityofthestudentexperienceinhighereducation.Fostering reflective practice in lecturers, an idea inspired by Schön's work (1983,1987),isthedominantphilosophyonthesecourses;atleastintermsofespousedtheory(Ecclestone,1996).Thisnotionunderpinsthecurricularcharacteristicsjustdescribed.Theideaisrootedinacritiqueofthetechnicalrationalistapproachtoprofessionalpractice,whichsearchesforthe'right'waysforprofessionalstobehaveindifferentcircumstances regardlessofcontext.Thenotionofreflectivepractice,bycontrast,positsthatallprofessionalpracticehasatitscoreakindofartistry,andthatthewaytobetterpracticeisthroughcareful examinationofthatartistry,'thatis,thecompetencebywhichpractitionersactuallyhandleindeterminatezonesofpractice'(Schön,1987,p.13).Thereflectivepractitionerisable tothinkabouthisorherpracticeinintelligentways,andtoimprovethelevelofartistryovertime.Becomingsuchathinkerdoesnotcomeeasily:'Thestudentcannotbe*taught*whathe[*sic*]needstoknow,buthecanbe *coached*'(Schön,1987,p.17).SchönapprovinglyquotesDewey (1974,p.151)onthis:

> He [*sic*] has to see on his own behalf and in his own way the relations between means andmethods employed and results achieved. Nobody else can see for him, and he can't see justbybeing'told',althoughtherightkindoftellingmayguidehisseeingandthushelphimtoseewhatheneedstosee.

Whiletherehavebeenanumberofcriticismsoftheconceptofthereflectivepracti-tioner (see Trowler& Cooper, 2002, pp. 234-235 for a summary), this kernel ofthinking remains at the core of almost all higher education teachers' educationalprogrammes, at least rhetorically. Similarly, it lies in nascent form underneath theNTFS, as an Economic and Social Research Council-sponsored evaluation of thatschemefound:

> Noexplicitmodelorstrategyforeducationalchangeappearstoinformtheworkofthe 20 fellowship holders. Implicitly they are viewed as reflective practitioners who willdisseminate 'good practice' within the sector. This approach appears to be based on'transfer' theories of learning which do not recognise the complexity of educationalchange … Transfer theories of learning fail to recognise the complexity involved ineducationalchangeandthedifficultyof'embeddinggoodpractice'.Ithasbeendemonstrated that 'ordinary' teachers will not accept and apply curriculum changesunless they share the educational beliefs and values that underpin them. (Skelton, 2002,pp. 3,11)

This reliance on individuals as change agents also permeates many approaches toorganizationalenhancement.Forexample,someunderstandingsofthe'learning

organization' simply see it as a well-managed collection of reflective practitioners(Pedler *et al.*, 1990; Edmondson &Moingeon, 1998), or one in which individuals'mentalmodelsareimproved(e.g.Senge,1990;Argyris,1993).So,despiteanapparentlymacroperspective,suchnotionsofthe'learningorganization'involvetheoriesofchange(inthiscaseteachingandlearningenhancement)atthemicrolevel.Thus,Kim (1992, p. 1) defines the learning organization as 'consciously manag[ing] itslearningprocessesthroughanenquiry-drivenorientationamongallitsmembers'.

Withinthemanagementlearningliteraturegenerally,therehasalsobeenanemphasis on how individuals in organizations learn (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Daft &Weick, 1984; Pedler *et al.*, 1990; Argyris, 1993). This agentic theory of change isfounded on a set of ontological assumptions summed up by the term 'methodologicalindividualism' (MI). MI approaches the study of societies and organizations with theassumptions that individuals' thoughts and decisions are more significant than thestructures they operate within. It is individuals' agency, their decisions and actions,which shape the institutions and social circumstances they operate within, rather thanviceversa.

MI rejects structural explanations for social phenomena, which see individualactions as determined by social structures around them, which lend them regularityand predictability. Change involves better approaches to practice eventually beingdispersed by individuals across organizations and systems. Such an approach appearsto be endemic to formal educational policy making in the UK, as both Coffield(2002) and Guest (2001) argue in relation to vocational education and trainingpolicy, where a flood of short-term and disparate initiatives focused largely on theindividualledto:

> behaviourthatisunlikelytotackletheunderlyingproblematanorganizationallevelandleaves the cultural institutions that gave rise to the problem in the first place largelyuntouched. (Guest,2001,p.5)

While we can see methodological individualism and dispersion (or 'transfer') theoriesunderpinning many higher education policies, those policies aimed at the macro leveltendtobeunderpinnedbymorecollectivisttheories:forexample,theTQEFwithitsemphasis on organizational teaching and learning strategies. Here the 'learninguniversity' is one in which strategies are clear, explicit and appropriate. Internal policiesarecongruentwithoverallstrategies,sothatpracticesareacquiredandadoptedto better suit the university's adaptation to its environment and the achievement of itsgoals. In this case, the theory of change is closer to the understanding of learningorganizationsasembodyingresiduesofpastlearninginorganizationalroutines(e.g. Levitt&March,1988).Inthisway,thelearningorganizationishighlyadaptiveandveryeffectiveinachievingcleargoalsinachangingenvironment.

More holistic and structuralist theories of change are also seen in change strategieswhich go beyond the level of the university to the discipline, such as those adopted bytheLTSN.Herethetheoryofchangeseesdisciplinaryepistemologyandassociatedcultures as the key to enhancing teaching and learning practices and the student experience.Teachingandlearningpractices,thetheorygoes,aredifferentindifferent

disciplines largely because of the epistemological characteristics of those disciplines.Change strategies need to be holistic and oriented to the discipline as the significantlevel of analysis, approached through its manifestations in university departments,conferencesanddiscipline-specificpublications.

The levelsof analysis:themissing mesolevel

These different initiatives by the government and its agencies have consciouslyattacked the issue of enhancing teaching and learning in higher education at differentpoints,andlevels,ofthesystem.

Therehave,then,beeninterventionsatthelevelofthe individual,themicrolevel,andatt helevelofthe universityorofdisciplines,themacrolevel.Thesemergeintoeach other—and it is right that they do so. However, there is a significant lacuna atthe meso level, which in universities is the level of the department and workgroup.There has been remarkably little discussion of appropriate strategies for shiftingthinking and practices, or to theorizing change at this level. This is not only true ofapproaches to the enhancement of teaching and learning in universities, but ofmanagementsciencemoregenerally,wherethefocustendseithertobeontheindividualortheinstitution,withnoclearrationaleforwhythatisthecase(Clegg*etal.*,1999, p. 5; Edmondson, 1999, p. 302). It is not clear yet that the CETLs initiative,aimedatthislevel,willyieldbenefitsforacademiccommunitiesofpractice,resting asitdoesonthenotionof‘excellence’,ratherthanthatof‘change’.

Trowler*et al.* (2002) have argued elsewhere, and we argue briefly below, that themeso level of analysis is a particularly significant one. We also suggest that a socialpractice theory of change helps us to understand how change can be blocked or facil-itatedatthislevelofanalysis.

Social processes at the departmental or subdepartmental, workgroup, level areparticularlysignificant,becauseitisherethatstudentsandlecturersengagetogetherin teaching and learning practices. It is here that changes actually take place, and agoodtheoreticalunderstandingofhowandwhythishappens—ordoesn’thappen—is therefore necessary. We suggest that an appropriate theoretical approach here restson social practice theory (SPT—see Wenger, 1998; Engestrom, 2001). As well asaddressing the meso level, this theory addresses the social and affective dimensions ofchangeinadditiontothepsychologicalandcognitive.Briefly,itarguesthatthemostsignificantaspectsofchangeprocessesinteaching,learningandassessmentinvolvesocial interaction at the level of the workgroup. As workgroups engage in commonprojects associated with major tasks over the long term they develop ways of behaving(norms), ways of understanding their world (taken-for-granted knowledge) and ideasabout what is good and bad (values). In short they are involved in the social construc-tion of reality, at least in the areas of common engagement that they have. Theydevelopacommondiscourse,auniquewayofusingthetoolsavailabletothemandacontext-specificunderstandingofaspectsoftheprojectthattheyareengagedin.

Clearly, they do not have total control over all aspects of social reality—they arenotcompletelyagentic.Socialstructureslimittheirroomformaneouvreand

influence the workings of the group in important ways. These may include culturalcharacteristics associated with the larger society in which they exist (‘Great Culture’,asAlvesson[2002]callsit),genderedaspectsofbehaviour,professionalvaluesa ndthe rest. However, each workgroup will have aspects of social reality unique to it,createdthroughsocialinteractionoverthelongerterm.Thiswillimpingeinimportantwaysonanyproposedchangestopractices,whichwillbeinterpretedandimplemented in ways mediated by pre-existing local cultures. Again, outcomes will berelativelyunpredictabletoanyonenotfamiliarwiththespecificsoflocalcultures,aswil l the ways in which those proposed changes will be received and interpreted byworkgroupsontheground.Initiativesfortheenhancementofteachingandlearningwill ,then,befilteredandadaptedratherthanjustadoptedaccordingtolocalculturalcharacteristics.

Appliedtothefieldofteaching,learningandcurriculuminuniversitiesinparticu-lar, SPT suggests that workgroups develop distinctive approaches to learning andteachingastheyengageonthesetaskstogetherovertime.Oneelaborationofthisisin the notion of teaching and learning regimes (TLRs—Trowler& Cooper, 2002).These are contested and dynamic, but nonetheless coherent and distinctive. More-over, they will be conditioned by institutional context and by disciplinary differ-ences—structural factors at various levels within which the TLR operates—TLRs areopen,natural systems.

Inbrief,TLRscompriseaconstellationofnineculturalcomponentswhichhaveasignificant impact on the approach taken in different higher education locales toteachingandlearningandassessment.Thesecomponentsare:

- The development and attribution of *meanings*. As the workgroup engages on itsproject, the meaning of that project itself gains ontological solidity, and the compo-nentswhichcomposetheprojectalsodevelopaparticularreality.Thus,anundergraduate programme in a particular department comes to be thought about inunique ways, and, for example, the meaning of the grading criteria, that of thegradesthemselves,arecollectivelygeneratedandcommunicatedovertime,becoming‘solidified’intheprocess.
- The developmentandattributionof *codesofsignification*. Activities,organizations, terms, concepts and things not only have meanings attributed to them in a cognitive sense, but are layered with affective (emotional) significance. Thus, the term‘quality’, and organizations and people associated with it in a particular university,mayevokeresponsesofdelight,fear,worry,stress,orsomethingelse.Suchresponses are not simply individual in nature—they are socially conditioned asworkgroupsmeetnewcircumstances,discussthemandrespondtothem.Theconnotative layers of meaning are cultural in origin and import—both in terms ofGreatCultureandinlocal,workgroupcultures.Theseareverysignificantaspectsof TLRs, because concepts and practices like ‘lectures’, ‘multiple-choice examinations’, ‘problem-based learning’ and others become loaded with both meaning andcodes of signification. Any innovation will elicit responses of this sort—and that initselfwillconditionsubsequentactions.

- The development and use of *discursive repertoires*. Discourse too is socially generatedandused.Itbothlimitsandenablesthoughtandactions,structuringthewayprojects and tasks are conceived, discussed and pursued. While discursive reper-toires, the words and phrases used to express ideas, are generated in the widersociety, they are also locally generated, especially when they refer to forms ofknowing related to the workgroup's project specifically. Local discursive reper-toires may favour the conceptualization of teaching and learning as involving aconstructivistprocess,forexample,andsoshapethepracticesinadepartmentorwork group.
- Thedevelopmentof*recurrentpractices*.Asworkgroupsengageintasksovertime, theydevelopwaysofdoingthingswhichbecome'justnatural'—'thewaywedothings around here'. These are taken for granted, and so are only rarely reflectedonorevaluated.Theyincludespecificwaysofandcircumstancesforusingtools,such as email communication for example, and ways of behaving in meetings orwith students. It is usually only new entrants to the workgroup who find thesepracticesunusualorsurprising,and,afterayearorso,oftensinkintorecurrentlypractisingthemthemselves.
- Theformationof*identitiesin interaction*.TLRsaresociallycreatedbutthey comprise a number of individuals whose individuality is not lost within them. Aspeopleinteractwithintheworkgroupaprocessof'hammering'isoccurring,sothatpersonalandprofessionalidentities(orsubjectivities) are negotiated,sustained,attacked,defendedandsoon.Thiscanbesignificantforteaching,learning and assessment practices where dimensions of identity impinge on theseareasofpractice.
- The development and sustenance of *power relations*. All social groups involve thetransmission and application of power of various sorts: from simply making peopledo things which they do not want to do to more subtle agenda-setting or circum-stance-changing practices. The shape that power takes, the way it flows and how itsurfaces will vary from regime to regime. One thing is constant, though: powerrelations are always present, and they always have an effect on the practices ofworkgroups,includingthosetodowithteaching,learningandassessment.
- Thegenerationof*tacitassumptions*.Allworkgroups,infacteveryoneinsociety, operate partly on the basis of tacit assumptions. Not to do so would simply beimpracticable.Suchassumptionsarenotsurfaced;infactsomeformsofknowingcannot be surfaced directly. In TLRs collective assumptions about, for example,assessmentpractices,theirroleandvalue,caninfluencethepracticesinthatarea in very significant ways. These assumptions may have no basis in evidence, may bedetrimental to good practice and may even result in practices which are moreeffortful and less effective than many others, yet they continue to exercise theirinfluence.
- Thedevelopmentanduseof*rulesofappropriateness*.Associatedwithseveralofthe above characteristics, these are understandings developed within a workgroupabout the kinds of behaviours which are, and are not, appropriate: how a teacherbehavesintheclassroom,thekindsofinteractionsheorshehaswithstudents,

thelevelofworksheorheallocatestostudents,whetherandhowtextbooksare used, and the rest. Rules of appropriateness developed in a TLR conditionwhat feels normal and what feels deviant in relation to teaching, learning andassessment.

- The development and application of *implicit theories*. Again, these are related tosome of the above characteristics, particularly the tacit assumptions within a TLR.Implicit theories are, in a sense, 'bigger' than assumptions, though they encom-pass, for example, theories about teaching and learning (constructivist versustransmissive, for example) which come to inform practice. They are more likely tobe surfaced from time to time than tacit assumptions are, partly because they relateto practice in a more direct way, and partly simply because they are 'bigger' and sothere is more likelihood that, at least in part, they will be made explicit. Theseimplicit theories are not always generated wholly or mainly within the workgroup.They may come from pre-service or in-service training courses or may result fromdisciplinarysocialization,forexample.Wherevertheirorigin,theirimpactonthe practicesoftheworkgrouparenonethelesssignificant.

AtheoryofchangefoundedonSPTquestionstheassumptionthatthe'trained'individualenteringaTLRcanhaveasignificantimpactonitsrecurrentpractices,setsofassumptions,tacittheoriesandsoon.Itundermines completelyanysimpletheoryof'transfer' or dispersion. While TLRs are dynamic in character, they are also quitestable.WorkbyTrowlerandKnight(1999,2000)onorganizationalsocializationin university settings in England and Canada found that, while new entrants to a TLRwerefrequentlysurprised,evenshocked,bywhattheyfound,theseregimesbecamea s normalized for them as they were to the 'old hands' for whom the regime hadlargely become taken for granted. This is not to say that new entrants simplysuccumbed to the regime, nor that they had no effect on it: regimes are, after all,frequently contested and contain in themselves tensions and conflicts. Rather, theprocess of normalization was a rather powerful one, so that what was unusual andexplicitsoonbecametacitandsimplyunderstoodfornewentrants.

Small-scaleresearchcarriedoutelsewhere(Fanghanel,2004)hasidentifiedtensions reflecting the paradoxes and incoherence discussed in this article. Within theITLHEcourseenvironments,dissonanceswereidentified,particularlyinrespectofle cturers' and course providers' interpretation of the reflective practice paradigm andof synergies between structures and practices. Transferability of knowledge on teaching andlearningacquiredbynovicelecturerswasoftenproblematicconcetheywerereturn edtotheirprimarycommunityofpractice.Inadequatetransferwasalsoshowntoresultind eleterious practices.

This does not mean that higher education teacher education and warrantingnovice lecturers on accredited courses is a waste of time. However, expecting suchindividuals to be agents of change in their departments without a complementaryset ofpoliciesaddressing*departmental*practices—thesocial context into whichtheyreturn—probablyis.Wedevelopthisargumentaboutthe'nesting'oflevelsofanalysisnext.

Thepolicybundle

Policybundlesarecombinationsofformalpolicies,oftenaddressingdifferentareasof practice (finance, teaching and learning, research) which 'hit the ground' together,and are both experienced in relation to each other by practitioners and actually dointeract with each other, even if they were conceived and formulated separately. Suchbundlesoftencontainpolicyparadoxes,shapingpracticesincontradictorywaysandsetti ng up incommensurable goals. These paradoxes, like policies themselves, operateat different levels of analysis: the personal, the workgroup and the institutional andnationallevels.

For example, at the institutional level, evidence from research on innovation, diffu-sionandchangegenerallyconcludesthatrelianceonindividualsaloneastheagentsof change within institutions is ill founded. Hannan and Silver (2000) discuss thesignificance of 'individual innovation' of this sort (as opposed to other-directed or'guided innovation'). They note that where individual innovation operates in an envi-ronment which is hostile or indifferent to it there is little chance of success. Thereneeds to be some salience between such individual innovations and the 'priorities andplans of the institution or the faculty or the department' (Hannan & Silver, 2000, p144). Yet innovations associated with teaching and learning were generally accordedlow status and even treated with suspicion in the higher education institutionsHannan and Silver studied (2000, p. 145). They conclude that the dynamism andgroundednessofindividualinnovationwillneedmorefertilesoilinwhichtoroot,ifitistoha veanimpactonteachingandlearningpractices:

> One of the most significant findings of [this] study was that the nature of the institutionanditssub-units…wereveryimportantfactorsintheinnovationprocess,influencingtheincidence of innovation, its success and the likelihood of its becoming embedded.(Hannan & Silver,2000, p.32)

Research into the study of the *diffusion* of innovation confirms these findings. Diffu-sion is the process by which 'innovation is communicated through certain channelsover time among the members of a social system' (Rogers, 1995, p. 39). Studiesconfirm the prediction from SPT that diffusion, both within and between organiza-tions,requiresmutualadaptationofboththeinnovationandtheorganization,atleastto some extent. The innovation is adapted to the structures, processes, discourses andsoonprevalentwithintheorganization(thisissometimescalledthe'domestication'ofaninnov ation).Meanwhile,theorganization'sstructuresandpracticesneedtoaccommodatetotheinnovat ion,sometimesin unexpected and unintended ways(Van de Ven, 1986). This requires flexibility and 'a fair degree of creative activity'(Rogers, 1995, p. 395), which universities and their sub-units may be more, or less,abletoengagein.

Atahigherlevelofanalysisthantheinstitution,policiesonfunding,researchandwidening participation in higher education, for example, while laudable in them-selves,interferewiththeoperationofpoliciesonteachingandlearningtotheirdetri-ment. Because higher education policies are not 'joined up' in this broader sense, they'blockthechiofchange'.Wedonothavespaceheretoreviewthewholesetofhigher

educationpoliciesintheUK,anddemonstratetheirsaliencetoteachingandlearningenhancement.Insteadwewillusetwoillustrativeexamples.

The funding councils' research assessment exercise (RAE) has rewarded institutionsfortheirresearchoutput,whileitsteachingandlearningequivalent,theQAA'ssubjectreview,hadnodirectfinancialbenefitwhatsoever.Undertherulesuptothe2001 RAE, any applied research, including applications of pedagogical research, wasnoteligibleforentryorfundingthroughtheRAE.Thisillustratesonewayinwhichhighereducationpolicyisnotjoinedup:theparadoxicalwaysinwhichtheincentivesystems instantiated in funding and prestige-allocation mechanisms, on the one hand,and the drive to better learning and teaching practices, on the other, interact. AsHannan and Silver (2000) argue, such paradoxes are highly detrimental to changeefforts,partlybecausetheyaccordlowstatustoteachingandlearning.

A second example of disjointed policy relates to our earlier discussion of the 'learninguniversity'Aswesaw,theliteratureintheareasuggeststhattheideal'learninguniversity'isonewhichishighlyadaptivetoitsenvironment,andcan,forexample,effectively develop learning and teaching knowledge and practices in ways which helpit survive and prosper in a changing context. Yet doing this might easily be deleteriousin relation to the goal of improving teaching and learning, and the quality of thestudent experience. Such a university might learn to improve its rankings in leaguetables,teachmoreeconomicallyandefficiently,reduceitsnon-completionrateandattractmorefundingbyincreasingstudentnumbers.Noneofthesenecessarilymean*improved*learningandteachingorabetterexperienceforitsstudents.

Tobesuccessfulnowadays,auniversityneedstoplayanumberofdifferentgames. Each game has different goals and involves different rules. Some are about generatingincome. Others are about increasing funding through attracting greater studentnumbers.Someareaboutenhancingresearch,andresearchreputation.Thegoalsareoften incompatible, the rules are written separately, in different places by differentpeople. And winning at one may involve compromising in others. The learninguniversity plays to win in the games which are most significant to its survival andrelativeadvantage.Asitdoesso,itstructuresthepracticesofandconstraintsonthefaculties,departmentsandindividualswithinit.Thisdoesnotalways,orevenoften,include enhancing teaching and learning. This, to apply our metaphor, can only resultin*shachi*.

Conclusion:freeingthechiofchange

Wehaveargued,then,thathighereducationpoliciesdirectedatteachingandlearningtodatehavebeendisjointedandpartial.Significantchangeinthedirectionoftheenhancement of teaching, learning and improvement of the student experience issomethingthatisdifficulttobringabout.Onewayofmakingithappenistoencour-age reflective practice within reflexive departments that are situated in learninguniversities.Theseshouldbeassistedinachievingsetsofgoalsroughlycompatiblewiththeaimofenhancingteaching,learningandthestudentexperience.Theimplicationsofthisdiscussion,then,arethreefold.

First,thereneedstobebetter,moreexplicitthinkingaboutthepointatwhichpoli-cies and their implementation strategies need to be addressed within the highereducationsystem.Inparticular,appropriatelevelsofanalysisforparticularpolicie sneed to be selected. The gap in policies and strategies oriented to the meso level inparticularneedsto beplugged.

Wesuggestthatanappropriatesetofstrategiesmightbeaimedat facilitatinggreater reflexivity at the departmental level, thus emphasizing this very significantmeso locus of practice. Achieving reflexivity on an ongoing basis is not easy, butneitherisitimpossible.Areflexiveuniversitydepartmentisonewhich:

- is self-conscious about the nature of its TLR—has surfaced its previously implicittheories, developed consciousness about its recurrent practices, and has a greaterawarenessgenerallyaboutthespecificcharacterofthecomponentsofitsTLR;
- collectively evaluates how it operates as a department, and how its particularregimeinfluencesthis,andworkstobringaboutchangeforthebetter;
- thenactuallymakeschangesinitspracticesinsuchawayastoenhancelearningandteac hingortomakethatenhancementmorelikely.

Suchreflexivitycanbestimulated:thiswaspartiallyachievedinsomecasesbytheexperie nce of subject review (Leigh, 2004), but this was limited by the generallymechanisticandunwelcomecharacterofthatapproachtoqualityaudit.Stimula tionof this kind of reflexivity sometimes occurs too when critical events cause depart-ments to become self-aware; for example, when they are forced to address a crisissituationbroughtaboutbyreductionin applicationsfromstudents.

Wesuggestthefollowingtostimulatethedevelopmentofreflexivedepartments:

- anapproachtoqualityenhancementalongthelinesoftheScottishHigherEduca-tion Funding Council's quality assurance framework (SHEFC, 2002), whichencouragesinstitutionsandtheirsub-unitstoreflectoncurrentpractices;
- institutional procedures for validation and course review which require depart-mentstoaddresscurrentpracticesinanevaluativeway;
- evaluativeinstrumentswhicharedesignedinsuchawayastorequiredepartments toaskfundamentalquestionsaboutcurrentpractices(theCourseExperience Questionnaire used in Australia is one example—developed by academics in arigorous way). If 'what you test is what you get', then good tests bring about goodresults.

Second,thetheoriesofchangewhichunderpinpoliciesdirectedatenhancingteach-ing and learning in higher education need to be made more explicit than theycurrently are, and improved where necessary. One advantage of this would be thepotential to identify incompatibilities between different theories—disjointedness—andsohelpfacilitatejoineduppoliciesinthissensetoo.

Third,highereducationpoliciesneedtobeformulatedandimplementedinamorejoine d-up way than is currently the case. While no one can foresee all of theunintended consequences of policy, there are some obvious incompatibilities andincongruitywithinthecurrentpolicybundle.

ThedevelopmentoftheHigherEducationAcademyrepresentsanopportunityfor‘join edup’strategytoimproveteachingandlearning,andthequalityofthestudentexperience in higher education. The more collective approaches of the LTSN, forexample,andtheindividualisticapproachoftheILTHEcouldbeharmonized,integratedandworktocreatemoreeffectiveimplementationstrategies.

Let us return to our analogy with the Chinese concept of chi. Where policies aredevelopedinisolationfromeachothertheyproceedinparallellines,onlylinkingwherethey obstruct. Sha chi, or ‘secret arrows’, are avoided in Chinese buildings since theycreate disharmony. The proper flow of chi is harmonious, flexible. ‘Chi moves indragon-like curves and spirals’ (Page, 1988). If we follow this idea in the developmentofinitiativestodeveloplearningandteachinginhighereducation,itsuggeststhatiniti-atives should come together, link and intermingle. Separate initiatives should notmarch on, taking no account of what is to right or left, but regularly refer to each other,borrowingwhatislearnedfromoneinitiativeandtransferringthatlearningtoothers.

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