



Community of Practice Development Form – Linking London CATS Project in Management, October 2012

Achievements to Date

Since our last meeting at AoC we have begun to meet with our own individual project partners to agree project work plans and work here is ongoing. The summer break and recent period of enrolment have meant that partners have been particularly busy and progress has been slow to get going, as predicted. On 12 October we held the second meeting of the project steering group and it was a timely opportunity to touch base in particular with those partners who had not been in contact. At this meeting we learned in more detail of the precise stage that each partner has reached and it is clear that, between them, they are going to engage fully with project parameters. In addition, there appears scope to draw together information gained about current and planned provision in management to develop a range of useful publicity materials to engage learners and employers more fully than at present.

At the meeting, it was agreed that it would be useful to have a meeting of all curriculum people involved in the project in mid November and planning for this will begin shortly. The aim is both to ensure that they are fully up-to-speed with main project aims and to kick start work on articulation agreements and curriculum development activity at individual project level. The next meeting of the steering group is in early December and by that stage we are confident that all partners in receipt of project funding will have their college / university-based projects well underway.

To help get the debate around credit moving, we have run 2 staff development sessions, the first, '*Credit – flexibility for the future*' on September 19 and the second, '*Professional Qualifications in Management*' the following week on September 26. At the first event, delegates explored some of the perceived advantages and disadvantages of a Credit Accumulation & Transfer (CATS) based system. The group then went on to reflect on the issues inherent in transition from Level 3 to 4 and the need to develop a culture of progression based on a facilitative pedagogy across such aspects as programme design, teaching & learning, assessment and student support. Twelve people attended and, although some project partners (IAM and OCNLR) attended, it may well be worth repeating the event a little later on in the year, or at least develop a resource for partners, as feedback from delegates was very positive, several commenting on the value of the discussion and also how the event had helped in raising the profile of this subject in their thinking.

The second event saw representatives from the Chartered Management Institute, Institute of Administrative Management and Institute of Leadership and Management meet with Linking London delegates to discuss their work in relation to Professional Qualifications. Providing an overview of their services, each professional body consistently argued for the need for higher education to recognise the value of increased take-up of management qualifications, both to add value to business outputs and to enhance individual student employability. Referring to current programmes developed with HE providers it became apparent to delegates just how much work by the awarding bodies is actually taking place in this area, particularly in making the business curriculum up-to-the minute and leading edge, and tailored to individual programme need. Overall, the afternoon was very successful. Feedback from delegates attending the event highlighted the value both of the quality of the three speakers, as well as the opportunity offered to bring different stakeholders together to share issues and barriers at work in this important area.

We have also met recently for the second time with staff from the University of Greenwich to discuss peer evaluation and plan to go out to tender for an external project evaluator in November.

A discrete section of the website has also been set up to support the project (see <http://www.linkinglondon.ac.uk/cats-project/>) and we plan to house working documents on the site to



help with ease of access to related paperwork, and also create a resource for useful CATS sources / links.

Problems / Challenges of developing CATS

We are not really at this stage but trying to develop the curriculum that will support such transfer. Partners are obviously grappling with the issues involved and it will be particularly helpful the more that, working together, the national project team identify useful resources to support their understanding of key processes. Working across partners necessarily involves issues of autonomy and ownership and reaching agreement can sometimes be quite difficult.

Working across the FE/HE interface

As a former Lifelong Learning Network, we are well used to working across the FE / HE interface and have a long history of partnership working in this area. The project has two HEI and three FEC partners (Birkbeck, University of London; Middlesex University; City of Westminster College; City & Islington College and Westminster Kingsway College respectively). Staff involved in the project relate well to each other and no problems with regard to future partnership working are envisaged.

Working with other agencies

This is an important part of our project and we have steering group representation from a number of professional and awarding bodies, including: City & Guilds; Institute of Administrative Management; Institute of Leadership and Management; Chartered Management Institute, as well as the Open College Network London region. These representatives are all very enthusiastic about the project and, as has already been mentioned, have given of their services free at a recent Linking London event to publicise their work in relation to professional qualifications in management. We envisage that their role will become more important as the individual projects get underway and links with professional qualifications are made. As evidenced by discussions at the last Steering Group, this is already starting to happen.

'Eureka' moments / Key learning outcomes for the project

I don't think we should underestimate the time it takes to get a project up and running. At the end of the day, the Linking London CATS project consists of a number of smaller individual projects united by overarching common themes and given the summer break and subsequent period of student enrolment, it has taken partners time to settle down to serious project planning. However, partners are excited by prospective project outcomes and we envisage that serious project learning will ensue.

Emerging themes?

Again, it is a little early to be able to answer this question. However, the language of credit still appears to be a problem in that learners are often still in the dark about how credit can help with progression. The added value of collaborative working should perhaps be noted and the use of credit as a metric, with the possibility of perhaps a 'beginners guide' being useful. Perhaps, too, the need for learner / end user research – to what extent are they aware of / do they perceive the benefits of credit?

Sue Betts/ Pam Calabro, Linking London

October 2012