Hi everyone, and a belated Happy New Year!

Welcome to issue 21, which in all probability will be the last in the current format as here at CRA we review our publications strategy (of which more anon). For this issue though we offer our customary broad range of contributions from the PDP community, sectorally – with Harriet Barnes on relating PDP to the Quality Assurance landscape in HE – through credit rated offerings through the institution – Sharon Milner at Ulster – and WITHIN particular programmes - Penny Burden and Sallyanne Theodosiou at the University of the Creative Arts. We also draw deeply upon the personal, as Neil Raven reports directly upon his own learning in respect of reflective diary keeping, and in doing so takes us into the world of Continuing Professional Development. A emphasis on Professional Development is similarly provided by Roy Williams & Regina Karousou, who focus upon the methodology of ‘Nested Narratives’ as a mechanism for the iterative development of facilitated individual understanding developed through the ‘lived curriculum.’ Looking ahead, this links strongly to notions to be developed by John Cowen in respect of lifewide learning at the forthcoming Symposium on this topic at Aston University, where he emphasises that such lifewide learning ‘occurs more or less contemporaneously and often incidentally in multiple and varied places and situations throughout an individual’s life course’. Interestingly, while Williams and Karousou emphasise recording achievement in respect of the formal curriculum and Cowan seeks to argue for a radically revised pedagogy many aspects of the feedback in respect of the ‘don’t call it PDP’ question on the mailbase recently emphasised the connection between personal and professional. Plus of course, developments in respect of the Higher Education Achievement Report are stimulating debates about what constitutes learning and achievement. So we have as ever, a large agenda as the year unfolds.

We are also conscious that maintaining the network is ever more important in current times. So for CRA members, and those who want to be so, we’ve sharpened up the membership offer (see page10) For all we’ve recognised that securing time away from the workplace may be more difficult, hence our lunchtime ‘chat’ sessions and new webinars – see page 11 for more details of the first of these. We would also encourage you to take advantage of on-site support as appropriate – i.e. we come to you – particularly where this is included in your membership fee. We will of course be continuing with a targeted programme of events, not least the Symposium on Lifewide Learning, the epic event in London in the summer, and the CRA Residential Seminar in the Autumn. More details on page 8. And finally, can we encourage each and every one of you to let us know how we can support your work more effectively – perhaps through strategies we have yet to consider!

Happy Reading!

Rob Ward,
Director

In this Issue;

| PAGE 2 | PDP – In a leaner meaner world. A structured and supported process OR innovative and independent?? Penny Burden and Sallyanne Theodosiou, University of the Creative Arts |
| PAGE 3 | The reflective diary: a valuable tool in continuing professional development Neil Raven, Aimhigher East Midlands & Loughborough University |
| PAGE 4 | Nested Narratives for Recording Professional Development Roy Williams & Regina Karousou, University of Portsmouth |
| PAGE 5 | Locating PDP in the quality assurance landscape Harriet Barnes, Development and Enhancement Group, QAA |
| PAGE 6 | ‘Reflect on Me’ at Ulster Sharon Milner, University of Ulster |
| PAGE 8 | EVENTS - Student Lifewide Development Symposium / 9th international ePortfolio & Identity Conference |
| PAGE 9 | NARN Special Edition Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education |
| PAGES 10 & 11 | CRA Membership Offers & Details of Upcoming Webinars |

Student Lifewide Development Symposium

Tuesday March 1st 2011 10.00-16.00
Lakeside Conference Centre, Aston University, Birmingham

The symposium focuses on the role of PDP, portfolios, facilitation techniques, technology and personal development, recognition schemes, in encouraging and enabling holistic student development through their lifewide experiences

Only £50 Fee

CHECK PAGE 8 FOR DETAILS
PDP – In a leaner meaner world.
A structured and supported process
OR
innovative and independent??

Penny Burden and Sallyanne Theodosiou, University of
the Creative Arts

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The University for the Creative Arts (UCA) is a specialist
art and design institute which was formed following the
merger of Surrey Institute for Art and Design with Kent
Institute for Art and Design and was awarded University
status in 2008. Explicit PDP practice across the institution
largely consists of PDP tutorials where students complete
a self-assessment “skills audit” which is then used as the
basis of tutorial discussions. In reality of course, practice
varies and, as is often the case in many HE institutions,
the engagement of academic staff largely depends on their
understanding and appreciation of the process, therefore
the student experience of PDP can vary enormously.

The Graphic Design course at UCA Epsom underwent a
revalidation in 2009/2010, which required a drastic rewrite
of the course in order to cope with student numbers,
reduced funding and a lack of space – in other words, to
do more with less. The revalidation created opportunities
as well as challenges and one opportunity was for PDP to
become embedded in the course in innovative ways which
encourage greater independent learning within the student
body.

PDP is introduced gradually – in the first year it is very
much a structured and supported process as students are
guided through the various assessment activities.
Students are expected to become more autonomous,
independent learners as they progress through the course.
They reflect on their learning as they proceed, self-editing
their work and developing confidence in their own
judgment; action planning and setting goals as they go
along. PDP tutorials continue to be part of the programme
as students are helped to identify gaps in their skills and
knowledge and place their practice within the creative
industry. The recognition of independent practice
captures and recognizes learning outside the formal
environment. Integrating PDP in this way helps students
to make stronger links between industry and their learning
and development within the course (Atlay 2009).

All the staff have industrial experience, so industry
connections are important and many events are
incorporated into the course which allow students to meet
and interact with inspirational practitioners from the world
of graphic design. There are regular workshops and

visiting speaker programmes as well as outside events
which help students to start networking in what is a very
competitive environment. Students are encouraged to
take risks with active failure being as acceptable as
success, and the students clearly learn much from this
process as evidenced in their reflective blogs.

So, in this leaner, meaner world of massive cuts in higher
education – particularly to the art and design curriculum –
PDP plays a large part in helping students get the most
from their studies and crucially, in connecting with the
world of work. PDP in Graphic Design at UCA Epsom is
structured and supported through the assessment
requirements – but it is also something which actively
encourages innovation and independent learning due to
the emphasis on creativity from employers and the high
level of autonomous reflection required during the whole
course.

Entering the world of graphic design can be difficult. A
year’s experience is usually the minimum requirement for
most vacancies so it’s a very tough, competitive world to
gain entry to. The portfolio career is very much in
evidence and is well supported by the BA Graphic Design
course at UCA Epsom with half of last years graduates
well into the first stages of their careers via internships and
full-time employment.

References:
Atlay, M (2009) Integrating PDP practice in the curriculum, in
Personal Development Planning and Employability ed Ward, R and
Watts, A G, p 18, Higher Education Academy, York
The reflective diary: a valuable tool in continuing professional development

Neil Raven, Aimhigher East Midlands & Loughborough University
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Much discussion around reflective diaries concerns their use as a training tool in teaching and health and social care (Gray, 2007), but could they have a CPD role amongst established professionals, especially managers in higher education? This question has informed research conducted over the past few months.

The approach adopted for this investigation was that of the participant-researcher - I was the researcher exploring aspects of my own practice. Although small scale and qualitative in nature, this approach can benefit from a researcher’s greater understanding and appreciation of practice. In addition, such studies tend to be most useful when some background to the research is provided and attempts made to relate the findings to fellow practitioners (Booker and Macpherson, 1999).

Regarding background, I manage Aimhigher in the East Midlands which is based at Loughborough University. Like many management roles, the work involves overseeing a range of projects (in this case, those associated with widening participation) and liaising with a variety of organisations.

I began my reflective diary with the intention of keeping it for 12 months. This I considered would allow sufficient time to test the diary’s usability and value. During this period the diary went through a number of iterations. In part, these were informed by my reading around the subject; however, they were also guided by consultations with academic colleagues and by my own assessment of what worked in practice. Amongst the key issues addressed during this process were the frequency and nature of entries and the medium used. What follows is a summary of some of the findings.

- A daily record. Daily entries helped me establish the habit of writing a diary. They also enabled me to gain valuable insights into the routine aspects of my role which proved vital in determining the success or otherwise of my practice.

- Pen and paper. Although I experimented with a laptop, I came to realise the benefits of pen and paper in terms of its even greater transportability (including being able to access my diary on crowded trains!). In addition, I found the process of using a note pad a greater spur to creativity; I also enjoyed the ease of interspersing linear text with mind maps.

- A structured approach. For some adopting a structure curtails spontaneity. However, from my experience a good structure guides thinking and promotes reflection. The one I came to adopt comprised a description of the experience followed by an exploration of associated feelings and thinking. The value of considering feelings is that they do much to condition how one perceives and responds to events. Meanwhile, thinking through experiences helped me identify links and associations. It also kick-started the final two reflective phases: identifying lessons learned and selecting actions to be taken (Boud, 2001, Shepherd, 2005).

My aim was to keep a diary for a year. However, I have continued with this approach because it has proved to be a valuable method of facilitating my continuing professional development. I would welcome comments and reflections on any aspect of what has been discussed.

References:
The workshop on Nested Narratives was an opportunity for participants to explore a particular approach to story telling, developed in the Affordances for Learning research (https://affordances4learning.wikispaces.com/), funded by the HEA in 2007-08. Participants were asked to tell stories to each other about “something they had learnt that was of importance to them”. We suggested that the story should be about recorded achievement, but this was left open to participants to change if they wanted to.

Nested Narratives is a prompted narrative methodology (see http://learningaffordances.wikispaces.com/Methodology) in which the facilitator asks the narrator to tell a story, without interruption, followed by requests to describe more about selected phrases in the narrator’s first story, producing layers of ‘nested’ sub-stories. This process is repeated, to produce further iterative layers of sub-stories. In the process, the narrator explores their own experience, on their own terms, within their own sense-making. The facilitator’s prompts are entirely dependent on the actual phrases in the narrators original story, and the prompts are confined to requests to describe what happened.

Sense-making
The facilitator is, essentially, an enabler and observer of the narrator’s own sense making – of the narrator’s ‘research’ as it were, into their own tacit knowledge and understanding of their story. These stories provide rich descriptions of personal and professional sense-making, and are valuable resources for sharing with a wider audience, albeit at the discretion of the narrator. An interactive interface is currently being developed for sharing nested narratives, and to enable the narrators to further explore their own stories by adding associated pictures, audio, etc to selected ‘nodes’ in their nested narratives. The nodes are primarily based on the audio recordings of the stories, which centre the stories on the narrator’s unedited ‘voice’ – literally and figuratively.

Response to the Workshop
The response of the participants at the workshop was, first of all, to quickly get immersed in story telling – as facilitators, and then as narrators. Participants were given a brief introduction to the method, and some brief notes on how to go about it, but required little further guidance. Most of the workshop was taken up by the story-telling.

In the discussion that followed, many of the participants remarked on the power of the method to elicit stories, and to articulate ‘deep tacit’ understandings of learning and professional identity. Participants also remarked on the need to handle these ‘narratives of the self’ sensitively and ethically. It was emphasised that the pre-amble to story telling includes an opt-out clause for both the facilitator and the narrator, if at any stage either of them is uncomfortable with where the story is going. We also emphasised that the narrator must be asked for permission to share the stories, particularly in audio format.

What’s the Question?
One of the striking things about PDP is that there are a number of solutions and packages available. The Nested Narratives method (and the interactive interface which is still under construction), joins a growing list of such solutions. However, we need to ask: “If these are the solutions, what’s the question?” It might be useful to distinguish two basic issues: on the one hand, ‘recording achievement’, and on the other hand, ‘recording professional development’. (‘Creating a portfolio’ can be derived from these two activities).

Recording achievement is, broadly, about what we learn to know, and to do. It is typically designed in linear sequences, and follows the “Intended Curriculum” (see: Beverley Oliver’s keynote, www.recordingachievement.org/images/pdfs/case_studies/post_event/cra2010boliver.pdf).

Recording professional development on the other hand is about who we try to become. It is primarily about personal and professional identity. It takes place in multi-track, simultaneous, often contradictory narratives, and is definitely not linear. It is similar to the “Experienced [or lived] Curriculum” (see: Beverley Oliver’s, keynote,
These two activities are of course interlinked, and can be summed up by the paradox: “We live life forwards, we make sense of it backwards”. Graphically, it can be represented as follows (see Figure 1), with the top section representing recording achievement against the Intended Curriculum, and the bottom line representing recording professional development, within the Lived Curriculum:

**Figure 1: Recording Achievement & Recording Professional Development**

Resources for both planned and unpredictable events (see James, A at [http://www.arts.ac.uk/ppd](http://www.arts.ac.uk/ppd) ) and the workshops provided by Burden and Theodosiou (see page 2 above) amongst others, are also likely to relate to this scheme.

### Locating PDP in the quality assurance landscape

Harriet Barnes, Development and Enhancement Group, QAA

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The quality assurance landscape for UK higher education is at something of a cross roads, and with so much going on, it can be difficult to see the wood for the trees. HE is always changing, with larger numbers and more diverse students, different modes of study and new types of providers, but at the moment, the future seems very uncertain, with the impact of proposed funding changes unknown. To add to the complexity, HE is a devolved responsibility, so the political context in each of the four nations of the UK is different.

For England, it's impossible to start anywhere but with the Browne review of student finance. This proposes leaving English HE to operate as a market, increased fees for undergraduates and reduced government funding for teaching. The government will set out how they plan to use these proposals in a White Paper in Spring 2011, but one thing is clear –information to inform student choice has never been more important. Work is already underway on student charters and the 'key information set' which will go some way to addressing this need, but it will probably remain a moving target. Following QAA's consultation on a new method of institutional review for higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland, the outcomes will be published early in 2011. The method was developed to address the principles for the quality assurance system agreed earlier in the year. One of the main changes is a proposed move to four judgements, on academic standards, quality of learning opportunities, enhancement and public information. It's also planned to have shorter and clearer published review reports.

In Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government is considering changes to the funding, structure and governance of the HE sector, following the publication of the strategy *For our future*. In Scotland, a review of the Quality Enhancement framework is planned for spring 2011, and Universities Scotland is starting to consider possible future funding models.

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6. [www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/aboutus/qualityframework.asp](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/aboutus/qualityframework.asp)
UK wide, the sector-led review of external examining will report early in 2011. It is likely that this will recommend that development of a set of minimum expectations for external examiners, which QAA will develop as part of a revised Academic Infrastructure. The Academic Infrastructure is a set of UK-wide, nationally agreed reference points that give all higher education providers a shared framework for setting, describing and assuring the quality of the learning experience and standards of higher education awards and programmes. It is a main reference point for QAA's review processes.

8 www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/PolicyAndResearch/PolicyAreas/QualityAssurance/HowTheSystemWorks/Pages/ExternalExaminers.aspx
5 www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/
9 www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/evaluation10findings/
11 www.qaa.ac.uk/news/consultation/AI.asp

So there are lots of pieces of the jigsaw to fit together and it's not entirely clear what the finished picture might be, but it's also an ideal opportunity for PDP practitioners to contribute to the debates and make sure there is a place for PDP.

### ‘Reflect on Me’ at Ulster

Sharon Milner, University of Ulster

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This short paper outlines the recent development of a level 4, 10 point CPPD (Certificate in Personal and Professional Development) online module entitled ‘Reflect on Me’, by members of the University of Ulster’s PDP Forum. This new module has been developed to help undergraduates become self starters in terms of independent study. The aim is to address problems that students encounter making their transition to University, by helping them to recognise the transferability of the skills developed within the module to subsequent programme activities (see Figure 1 below).

**Figure 1: Front page of the ‘Reflect on Me’ Module**

This module is run over the academic year and has four seasons (sections) which the student progresses through. They are called seasons to encourage the idea that the learning from this module is ongoing and iterative and not just semester bound. Each season contains a number of buttons which have tasks associated with them that build upon the learning from the previous season. Season 1 ‘Identify’, allows the student to identify skills and strengths they possess and identify opportunities to apply these skills. Season 2 ‘Plan’, encourages the student to plan and record opportunities to enhance their work, leisure and
study activities. In Season 3 ‘Action’, the students explore the feasibility of their plans and goals and putting them into action. The final season, Season 4 ‘Reflect’, encourages the student to evaluate and reflect on how far they have come throughout the module, and helps them to identify ways in which they can continue their journey into level 5 and beyond. Entry to each season is dependent on the student submitting a reflective log. The student is required to reflect on their skills and knowledge to generate a growing body of evidence that they can use to enhance their employability.

In order to engage the student and satisfy ‘student desire for entertaining and interactive methods of teaching’ (Samons 2005 cited in Hockings et al 2007) and the need for personally meaningful material and assignments (Hockings et al 2007), this module endeavours to take account of students different learning styles by presenting a variety of different tasks some of which use flash animation e.g., CETL NI Hybrid Learning Model (see Figure 2), or provide automated feedback such as Vark Learning Styles Questionnaire. These different task formats as well as the visual tracker (which allows the student to visually track their progress on the module – ie how many tasks they have completed on each of the four seasons of the module as illustrated in Figure 3) ensure that the module is highly interactive.

Due to the reflective nature of all the tasks within the module the hope is that the student will engage with the tasks in a meaningful way so that they gradually build up their learning and understanding of how their work, leisure and university skills and attributes all interlink. The module is currently being piloted across 4 Schools, Computing, Built Environment, Management and Economics within the University. It will be officially launched in September 2011 and as it is part of the CPPD framework it will be listed on section 6.1 of the students HEAR transcript.

Reference
Student Lifewide Development Symposium

Tuesday March 1st 2011 10.00- 16.00

Lakeside Conference Centre, Aston University, Birmingham

Students develop their capability for living, their resilience for surviving and the resourcefulness that enables them to prosper in the real world through their whole life experience – not just formal education. This conference will explore further the UK higher education phenomenon that views students’ engagement with their life experiences, as the fundamental resource for personal and professional development.

**ONLY £50 to attend the full day event**

For more detailed information please follow the link; http://lifewidedevelopmentsymposium.pbworks.com/w/page/33854279/FrontPage

For booking form, call for contributions and a current programme, check our events page at; www.recordingachievement.org

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ePIC 2011, the 9th international ePortfolio & Identity Conference

11-13 July 2011, at the Savoy Place, London

Should everybody have an ePortfolio? How do ePortfolios contribute to the identity construction process? How do ePortfolios support the acquisition of 21st century skills? How do ePortfolios support lifelong learning, orientation and employability? Why are ePortfolio mostly still non-interoperable? To find the answers to these questions, and more, join us at ePIC 2011, the 9th ePortfolio and Identity Conference.

For event details follow; http://events.eife-l.org/epic2011/epic2011

For details on the call for contributions, follow; http://tinyurl.com/24wgc5o
We are delighted to announce the publication of a special edition of the Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education (JLDHE):

“Researching and Evaluating Personal Development Planning and e-Portfolio Practice” which is now live online at

http://www.aldinhe.ac.uk/ojs/index.php?journal=jldhe

This edition of the journal draws upon the work of a National Teaching Fellowship Scheme project involving sixteen English universities forming the National Action Research Network (NARN).

The contents include a wide range of research papers and case studies dealing with the many facets of PDP design, implementation and development, along with discussion of the implications for learning and for higher education. This collection will provide useful reading for educational researchers; learning and educational developers; specialists in technology enhanced learning; and HE managers as well as those interested in PDP more generally.

We hope you will find this edition of the journal valuable and would be very pleased to receive feedback in any form. We are currently preparing the next regular issue of the JLDHE and expect to publish in January 2011. We are always pleased to receive proposals, drafts or abstracts for papers, case studies, reviews or other suitable material of interest to the learning development community. For details about the JLDHE or how to submit material, go to the website linked above and click on the appropriate link for readers or authors on the right hand side of the screen.

With best wishes

John Hilsdon and Andy Hagyard
JLDHE Editors

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www.aldinhe.ac.uk
CRA Revised Membership Offers

The CRA is - above all - its members; our collective voice, the collective power of us all. As a member of the PDP/e-portfolio community we would like to draw to your attention the benefits of becoming a Member of the Centre for Recording Achievement.

These are challenging times for all publicly funded provision; from as little as £60, membership is a cost effective way to remain in touch with the community, gain access to a wealth of useful material and expertise, and enjoy discounted rates at our highly successful seminars and events. In return for your commitment we will continue to do our utmost to support you and your work, and to provide opportunities to participate in wider funded projects wherever possible.

Contact Cath Hewson, cath@recordingachievement.org (01942 826 761) for further information

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"Why there’s never been a better time to do PDP"

Friday, 18 February 2011, 13:00 - 14:00

Led by David Stanbury, University of Reading

This webinar will:

- Review the extensive research base for PDP (arguing that PDP is well based in the literature)
- Identify some online tools and approaches which support PDP
- Describe emergent approaches to embedding PDP / employability in the curriculum
- Argue for a holistic re-conceptualisation of PDP which connects PDP with issues that form part of liberal learning

For more information follow;

http://tinyurl.com/66h3vlc

FREE! To institutional members, £10 fee for all others.

‘Graduate Attributes’

Monday 14th March 2011, 12:30-13:30

Led by Janet Strivens, University of Liverpool/CRA

‘Graduate Attributes’ are back on the higher education agenda. How can we develop an effective conception and definition of GA’s so that we can function as a touchstone and steer to curriculum development? And how can personal development planning (PDP) processes best contribute to their acquisition?

This online webinar is a follow on from the recent workshops Janet ran on behalf of the Higher Education Academy at Glyndwr University & Swansea Metropolitan University.

For more information follow;

http://tinyurl.com/6adr6r7

FREE! To institutional members, £10 fee for all others.