PDP and student learning:
What might we know and be able to build upon

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Cross Sectoral Agreement: Policy definition of PDP

- 'a *structured* and *supported process* undertaken by an *individual* to *reflect* upon their own learning, performance and / or achievement and to *plan* for their personal, educational and career development.'

$\qquad\qquad$ (QAA et al, 2001 &2009)

PDP – a world first

'A sector wide initiative aimed at implementing a particular framework for capturing and enhancing student learning' [Jackson & Ward 2004]

However, unlike all the other sector-wide pedagogic approaches commonly used in HE, such as lectures, seminars and tutorials, it is student centred.

PDP underpinning theories

- Person-centred learning [Rogers]
- Experiential learning [Kolb]
- Self-efficacy [Bandura]
- Self-regulated learning [Zimmerman]
- The learning paradigm [Barr & Tagg]
- Student-centred learning
- Autonomous learning & intentional learning

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The pedagogies of PDP

- Self-awareness raising – introspection, own values, beliefs, capabilities and drivers

- Target setting and planning of purposeful development

- Reflection – criticality, reviewing, re-visiting and being own 'critical friend'

- Self-advocacy – articulating achievements

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EPPI-Centre at SSRU commissioned by LTSN Generic Centre to review the research evidence on the effectiveness of PDP.

Two components:

- systematic map - more than 14,000 studies identified and screened for potential relevance. 157 studies met inclusion criteria for systematic map of research activity in the field.

- in-depth review - sub-set of 25 studies using experimental methods with independent outcome measures subjected to in-depth review

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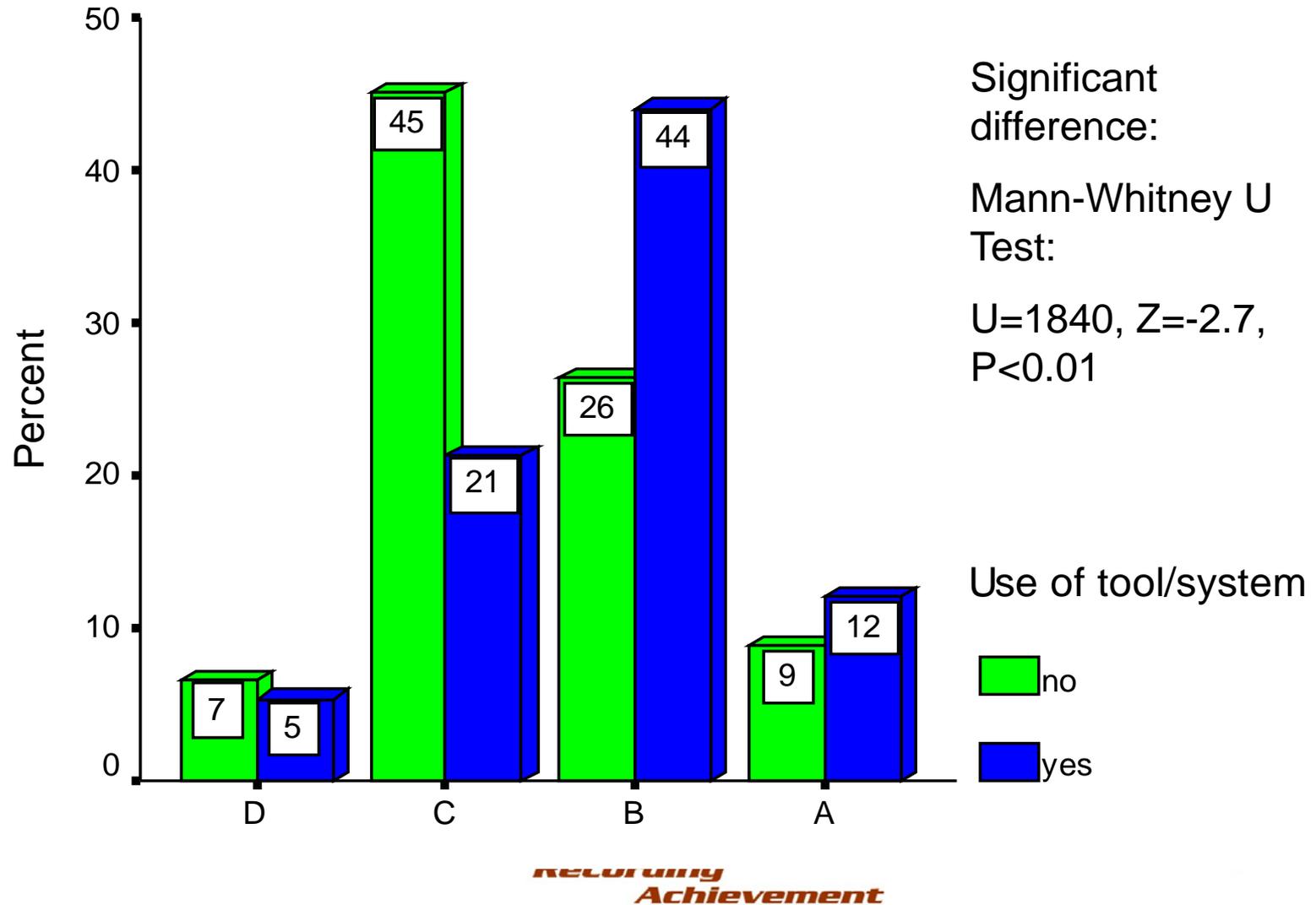*Achievement*

EPPI Systematic Literature Review

- Review Question: What evidence is there that *processes that connect reflection, recording, planning and action* improve student learning?

- "The review provides evidence … that the processes and actions that underlie PDP do have a positive impact on student attainment and approaches to learning"

See: [Gough et al 2003]
http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/EPPIWeb/home.aspx?page=/reel/review_groups/EPPI/LTSN/LTSN_intro.htm

Self report grade and PDP tool/system use

(all respondents)

Significant difference:

Mann-Whitney U Test:

U=1840, Z=-2.7, P<0.01

Use of tool/system

no (green)

yes (blue)

Research evidence

- 'Of the students who completed questionnaires on four of the pilot studies in 2002–3, over 70 percent expressed positive statements on the value of progress files in facilitating their learning experience.'

- Pilots across the University of Glamorgan [East 2005]

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Research evidence

- 'There are indications … that undertaking PDP benefits students in several ways. In particular, it appears to impact on student retention by clarifying career goals and increasing motivation towards the chosen degree programme.'
- A 1st year PDP module [Monks et al 2006]

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Research evidence

- 'Practising therapists evaluated it very positively as a tool to support development within their role whereas an adaptation of the tool trialled by undergraduate dental students (not therapists) was very unpopular.' [Haig 2008 on Fry 2002]

- 'Fry et al. (2002), and Pee et al. (2002) in their work with dental therapy students report that undergraduate students disliked the experience, although they recognised its value.' [Clegg & Bradley 2006]

National Action Research Network on Researching and evaluating PDP and ePortfolio

- 16 HE institutions in a 3 year project
- Grow practitioner researcher capability
- Produce broader evidence base
- Research questions include PDP's link to developing employability
- http://www.aldinhe.ac.uk/ojs/index.php?journal=jldhe&page=issue&op=view&path%5B%5D=10

Key themes

- PDP is a good fit with professional programmes in HE
- There is evidence linking PDP with improved academic performance
- PDP links well with increasing emphasis on value of reflection in learning
- Academic staff can be influential in promoting student engagement with PDP
- Employability provides a powerful driver to engagement
- E-Portfolios provide new opportunities and impetus

UW Student voices: professional development

- PDP is essential to me and my course. The main outcomes can be personal progression not only as a person but as a professional

- You are always learning as a [professional] and need to realise that reflecting on your practice is essential to learning.

UW student voices: Skills and Employability

- PDP is so that each person can have a greater understanding of the skills they have achieved and improved on and possibly to demonstrate to an employer your skills

- I think it will make me a lot more focused. I will work through my weakness and be a lot more employable. PDP is useful it has helped me work through skills I have needed to improve.

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Student voices: reflection and learning

- Main outcomes are the chance to reflect on your learning and to move on from this. A positive contribution to self-analysis.

- Encourages people to identify strengths and weaknesses and to overcome them by such acknowledgement and find ways to change them

- To encourage the process of life long learning and reflection.

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Student voices: self awareness

- useful for someone who hasn't got much confidence in their own ability and they need someone else to help them recognise their achievements.

- PDP allows a person to be self-reflective and analytical. It provides a person with the opportunity to map out where they want to go next and where they are coming from. It highlights areas for development which then allows target setting to be put in place.

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Ongoing issues

- Different conceptions in different subjects
  - Professional
  - Skills and employability
  - Learning (Clegg & Bradley 2006)
- 'Staff engagement is seen as key to successful implementation. This is more likely where PDP is promoted as a tool to improve learning in the discipline rather than focusing on employability per se.'
  - (Haig 2008)

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Ongoing issues

- PDP a 'chaotic concept' with magpie tendencies and possibly conflicting drivers

Liberal	Neo-liberal
Helping students develop themselves as critical, independent individuals	Encouraging conformity to the requirements of society, state and economy; self-surveillance
Situated and specific practices and development	Generic skills, attributes and outcomes
Promoting person centred learning	Policy driven requirement

'Except in the case of a few very vocational degrees, university isn't about what you learn on the course, it's about how that learning, how living and studying somewhere new, changes the way you think and who you are. Instead of forcing kids to make binding career choices at 17, higher education is supposed to give students who would benefit from further academic development a bit of space in which to find themselves.'

- David Mitchell, 'Three years dossing at university? It's the only way to train for life', *The Observer,* Sunday 22 August 2010

'A study on 1979 Harvard MBA students asked them, **"Have you set clear, written goals for your future and made plans to accomplish them?"** Only 3% of the graduates had written goals and plans; 13% had non-written goals and 84% had no specific goals at all.

Ten years later, they were interviewed again. **The 13% of the class who had goals were earning, on average, twice as much as the 84% who had no goals.** And the 3% who had clear, written goals were earning, on average, **ten times as much as the other 97% put together.**'

– Mark McCormack, (1984) *What They Don't Teach You in the Harvard Business School*, Bantam Books

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Key actions for the effective implementation of PDP (2009)

1 Institutional strategy and policy

– Have them and establish roles, responsibilities and resourcing

2 Presence within programmes

– Local engagement spelt out and included within curriculum activity

3 Engaging with learners

– Across the student lifecycle and their learning

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