Report on Year 3 activity
March 2010

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Projects - Research and development

1. With reference to the Year 3 Business Plan, please provide a summary of work/activities undertaken on behalf of WMCETT.

(i) Action Research and Development Projects

To manage partner organisations in the development of AR and D projects

At March 2009, 6 LSIS funded action research projects, ‘Enabling Access to Effective Mentor Support’ were under way. All were successfully completed by July 31st and the final reports submitted to LSIS and are available on the WMCETT website. Three of the projects went on to secure further development funding from LSIS.

- Birmingham Adult Education Service [BAES]: Liz Blakey
  *Improving subject mentoring for BAES staff undertaking ITT. FE Mentoring Community*

- WMCETT partner colleges: Jayne Hedges:
  *Developing a community of practice within FE*

- North Shropshire Voluntary Action [NSVA]: Louise Stokes
  *Piloting mentoring support for teachers and trainers in the VCS*

- Essential Skills Resource Centre: Elaine Goodall
  *Mentoring for Skills for Life tutors*

- Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire Training Providers Assoc [HWSTPA]: Mike Smith
  *Developing an infrastructure to support a mentoring network for WBL Teacher Educators across Shropshire, Hereford and Worcester*

- Community First: Louise Jones
  *Mentoring Support to Volunteer Tutors*

In line with our aim to develop research capacity in the sector, management of these projects included skills development, resources (see below) and networking opportunities for the practitioner researchers.

WMCETT provided 1:1 dialogues and three collective workshops held at Worcester University which were facilitated by John Maynard.

In the period of this report and building on the successful start-up seminar held in Jan 2009, two further workshops were organised: **April 9th** - project review, organising and managing data; **June 18th** - project analysis and report
writing. These were extremely successful and contributed significant added value to the project overall. (See below)

(ii) Online AR resources
Develop action research resources for WMCETT website.

Alongside the support for the above projects, the coordinator worked with Vron Leslie to compile a dossier of materials to support action research. Vron Leslie completed this work and uploaded the resources to the website at the end of the year.

(iii) CETT Journal
Commission and produce articles for the national CETT journal

The coordinator worked with three contributors to produce two articles for the national CETT journal, “Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector: A journal to inform and improve practice”.

- “Properly equipping our teachers for the future: re-reading research in practice as an everyday habit of professional practice”, by Alex Kendall, Associate Dean and Margaret Herrington, Visiting Professor, both from the School of Education University of Wolverhampton, was published in Vol 1. Issue 2. 2009. [The University is a member of the West Midlands HEI Forum.]


(iv) E&I Project Funding
Apply to the Excellence and Improvement fund to support further development of the LSIS Mentoring ARPs

The coordinator has worked on 2 bids for LSIS funding. A proposal to bid for a LLUK funded project in collaboration with Dr Joe Harkin, Visiting Research Fellow, Oxford Brookes University, was investigated but not pursued due to the short timescales required by the funders.

- A WMCETT bid with the Three Counties Professional Development Partnership (PDP) to the LSIS Flexibility and Innovation Fund for £90K to develop an innovative model for CPD in rural areas was unsuccessful.

- A bid with North Warwickshire and Hinckley College to the Excellence and Improvement Fund for £90K for “A partnership approach to Initial Teacher Training (ITT) mentor development” was successful.

The project was managed by Susan Martin (WMCETT) and NWHC on behalf of the University of Warwick ITE partner colleges. All partners completed and the final report was submitted to LSIS in December 2010.

2. Identify any activities listed above which have been particularly successful and explain why you think this occurred.
All activities have been worthwhile from the point of view of the CETT and the participants. In particular:

- **Re (i) above**
  From the point of view of the participants, the three collective workshops to support those engaged in the six mentoring A R & D projects held at Worcester University were extremely effective.

  As well as helping to build skills and confidence, the workshops enabled an extraordinary synergy to emerge from the process of the practitioner researchers sharing their findings and experiences in a collective setting and this definitely added value to all of them.

- **Re (iv) above**
  From the point of view of the CETT, the process of bidding for joint project funding contributes resources to WMCETT and also helps to strengthen links with partners.

- All WMCETT coordinators have been involved in one way or another in the work in this thematic area, making highly effective individual and collective contributions which align with their own priority areas. This integration across the CETT can be seen as a further successful aspect of the activities undertaken.

3. **Identify any activities listed above which have been particularly difficult to undertake, or targets which have proven difficult to reach, and discuss why.**

Project bidding is a time-consuming and uncertain business!
Appendix


LSIS enabled all CETTs to run a series of ARPs based upon mentoring. WMCETT ran six projects from November 2008 through to July 2009. The overarching project was managed by Jill Hardman for WMCETT.

The six projects covered every aspect of the lifelong learning sector: FE colleges, ACL, WBL and the voluntary sector. One project even explored mentoring for volunteer tutors.

The projects were supported by the CETT through the provision of 1:1 dialogues and three collective workshops focussed on managing an action research project. These covered: at the start - project planning and preparation, mid way - project review, organising and managing data and towards the end – project analysis and report writing. The workshops enabled an extraordinary synergy to emerge from each of the individual projects when participants shared their findings and experiences in a collective setting; this added value to all of them.

1. **Birmingham Adult Education Service**

*Experience of mentoring by BAES teacher training mentors working with a range of providers in the West Midlands*

This project surveyed staff in mentoring roles and eight ITT providers, plus people being mentored, and found large differences in experiences and expectations. A three-day training programme was held and 10 people were trained as mentors in the targeted areas. The project achieved its aims. The data base and support for mentors is being improved. A Virtual Learning Environment was set up and is having materials added to it. The BAES wants to work with WMCETT to develop common standards and protocols on mentoring.

2. **WMCETT partner colleges**

*Developing a mini community of practice within FE with a specific focus on improving mentoring provision (to link with teacher educator teams, their external mentors and subject learning coaches)*

This project involved the participation of three colleges that investigated mentoring for students on DTLLS courses. Large differences in practice were found, including how students found their mentors, whether external mentors were used and how they were supported, and the level of control over the mentoring process. A focus group of external mentors and ITT tutors was held, and there has been some sharing
of resources between the colleges. One of the colleges has set up a 0.5 mentoring co-ordinator’s post.

3. Community First

*Mentoring Support for Volunteer Tutors in the Third Sector*

The project found that mentoring in the voluntary and community sector was much more informal than in a further education or other settings. Some unexpected organisational barriers emerged relating to the role and professional development of volunteer tutors. Research looked into how volunteer tutors themselves see their roles and what people understood by mentoring. Two volunteer tutors took a PTLLS course and a mentoring workbook was developed which was completed and evaluated by six individuals. There are plans to encourage people to join an ITT network, and to put on a peer mentoring course. The main lesson to emerge was that support networks in this context cannot be developed through organisations but must be built by the volunteer tutors themselves, working outside and cutting across organisational boundaries. There is also untapped capacity and an appetite for this which should be further explored.

4. Essential Skills Resource Centre

*Mentoring for Skills for Life subject specialist trainees*

This project looked at support for people mentoring students on courses such as training to teach in literacy, numeracy and ESOL and also sought to evaluate the effectiveness of e-mentoring provided on the blended learning DTLLS programme. It was found that trainees are not always well supported and if mentors are not subject specialists (i.e. line managers), on-line specialist mentoring support should be provided. It was found that the experience and needs of mentors supporting trainees new to teaching compared to trainees who were experienced tutors was significantly different. Mentors generally wanted more training and access to relevant information online. The Centre has now set up a page for this and is looking at how to address the different needs of mentors working with new and experienced trainees.

5. North Shropshire Voluntary Action

*Developing mentoring for teachers involved in adult learning in the Voluntary and Community Sector in North Shropshire: an action research project*

This project examined the experience and support needs of voluntary and community sector (VCS) teacher mentors in North Shropshire. Interviews with a small group of mentors who were experienced tutors found a very high level of commitment to mentoring in the voluntary sector. A range of issues, including the need for an overarching infrastructure to support teaching and mentoring in the
sector and the fragility of some VCS organisations emerged as problematic. Short
term funding is counterproductive to the improvement of teaching in the sector and
the development of mentoring structures. A stable infrastructure is needed to serve
the small, dispersed organisations in the localities. There is also some need for a shift
in employer attitudes - it was felt employers often didn’t understand the value of
mentoring and how it could create a better and more effective workplace.

6. Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire Training Providers Association
(HWSTPA)

A Mentoring Framework for Teachers/ Trainers in the Work Based Learning Sector

After a survey of the 38 independent work-based/vocational training providers in its
membership to establish the level of teaching qualifications and mentoring
experience in the workforce, a draft framework for a mentoring process run by the
Association was produced. This includes a policy and protocols, person specification
and mentor role description as well as a mentoring skills handbook.

The project was managed by a steering group which included a range of provider
representatives. With good ‘buy in’ by the members, the Association has started to
build a sustainable network and ‘bank’ of mentors to support the professional
development of staff across the membership as a whole. The bank is maintained by
the Co-ordinator and the first group of mentors has been recruited and trained. They
will be matched to the first people taking a new blended DTLLS programme to be run
over an extended period. This programme has been designed especially to
accommodate the needs of the trainees and their employing organisations.

Status: All six projects have been successfully completed. Final reports are
available on the WMCETT website. Three of the projects have secured further
development funding from LSIS.

Jill Hardman
WMCETT October 2009