

Talking about Teaching (T@T)

Impact evaluation of the 2005 & 2006 events

Introduction

The TAT teaching (<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/sddu/lt/teachtalk/index.htm>) series of seminars began in March 2005 with four seminars in the first year and five in 2006, (see table 1).

Table 1 - the T@T seminars evaluated in this report

	Date	Speaker	Title	attendance
2005				
1	7 th March	Chris Rust	Reducing Assessment whilst Maintaining the Learning	54
2	13 th April	Nancy Falchikov	Peer Learning: Varieties, Benefits and Problems	35
3	24 th May	Jude Carroll	Using Course Design and Assessment to Deter Student Plagiarism	44
4	14 th December	Noel Entwistle	Designing Teaching - Learning Environments to Promote Disciplinary Ways of Thinking	24
2006				
5	11 th January	Mantz Yorke	Increasing the Chance of Student Success in the First Year of FT Study	36
6	14 th February	Gilly Salmon	Online Brick Laying	42
7	28 th March	Reg Dennick	Problem-Based Learning	28
8	24 th April	Jude Carroll	Teaching International Students: Improving Learning For All	33
9	31 st May	Mick Healy	Linking Research and Teaching to Benefit Student Learning	33

The intention was to provide a stimulating forum for experienced teachers to reflect upon their own teaching in light of the ideas and work presented by expert invited speakers; and so initiate new thinking and practices at Leeds. The seminars usually began at 1.30pm and finished between 4.00 and 4.30pm. The events proved popular, attended by 230 staff (excluding organisers) with between 25 & 60 people at each event; some staff attended several workshops (as shown below).

No of sessions attended	No of staff attending	No of sessions attended	No of staff attending
1	182	4	6
2	35	6	2
3	5		

Evaluation Approach and Methods

The evaluation aimed to review the value of the T@T events from the perspective of those who attended any of the sessions. Views were gathered through

- ⇒ an anonymous, online BoS survey
- ⇒ small number of semi-structured interviews.

The survey questions sought to address a number of factual questions relating to how the sessions were advertised and organised, and some qualitative questions asking about the choices and experiences of attending. The survey was sent to all staff who had attended any of the T@T sessions. Colleagues who had attended two or more of the events were asked if they would be interviewed; three agreed. The interviews were particularly focussed on the impact and consequences of attending.

Results: survey

The BOS Survey was sent as an email link to all those people who had attended any of the T@T sessions. Eleven people completed the survey and the compiled data is given in Appendix 1; headline outcomes are given below.

Section 1: T@T - the seminars

- 1 *Which School / Department do you work in ?*
The respondents were from five different academic schools and two central units.
- 2 *Please indicate which T@T events you attended.*
The sample of respondents had, between them, attended all of the events that were offered.
- 3 *How did you find out about the T@T events ?*
Email was the main way in which the events were communicated.
- 4 *Why did you choose to attend and what did you hope to gain ?*
The topic, rather than the speaker, was the major reason for attending a particular session.
- 5 *What do you feel that you actually did gain from each session you attended ?*
Colleague's perceptions of what they gained varied considerably, but included
 - ⇒ networking opportunities
 - ⇒ ideas and tips for practice
 - ⇒ greater awareness / broadening horizons
 - ⇒ increased confidence
 - ⇒ motivation to try new ideas / approaches
 - ⇒ confirmation of practice.
- 6 *What, if any, practical impact have the T@T sessions had on your practice?*
 - 7 reported specific changes to practice.
 - 2 felt that they had made them better able / more informed to do their job.
 - 2 reported no direct impact.
- 7 *What was the best / most useful aspect of the sessions you attended? Please give details for each session you attended ?*
The only noticeable theme in the answers was the expertise of the speakers
- 8 *What was the worst / least useful aspect of the T@T sessions you attended ?*
Again, there was no discernible significant theme – apart from 3 respondents who said that there was NO *worst / least useful aspect*.
- 9 *Did the T@T sessions represent a good investment of your time ?*
Ten of the eleven agreed.
- 10 *Is this the kind of Continuing Professional Development that the University should be providing and investing in ?*
Eleven of the eleven agreed.

Section 2: T@T - the future

- 11 *If further T@T sessions were to be organised what improvements would you recommend ?*
Timing of the sessions is an issue – out of teaching time – but this is true for all events that SDDU offer and there is no ideal time.
- 12 *What topics or speakers would you like to see included ?*
A number of topics were suggested including
 - ⇒ transitions – into and out of university
 - ⇒ IT methods
 - ⇒ postgraduate – experience & supervision
 - ⇒ developing autonomy in students
 - ⇒ alternatives – to lectures and unseen examinations.
- 13 *Do you have any further comments?*
Only a minority replied - but all to gave comments in support of the T@T series.

Results: interviews

Three colleagues who had attended two or more of the events agreed to be interviewed. The interviews questions were focussed on the impact and consequences of attending. Full notes of the interviews are given in Appendix 2, and headline outcomes are given below.

Interviewee commented:

- high profile of the speakers - 'distinguished outsiders' who had much to offer
- the sessions provided a good networking opportunity
- it was one academic talking to another and not management speaking
- directly links to T7 on the Strategy
- seeing and hearing from the 'author' - the chance to hear from the person who did the research, these clever people who others, often inaccurately, refer to
- having proper research and rigorous investigation with critical analysis presented in the way others have research seminars – raises the profile of teaching and learning scholarship
- what Entwistle is working on now could be the big thing in the future - we all talk about 'Deep and Surface learning', so what he is thinking about now could be just as influential in the future
- the topics were topical and relevant
- the sessions have been really stimulating
- the interactivity was very good and enabled one to talk to people both within and outside of one's discipline on the topic
- the speakers were willing to raise the difficulties as well as the benefits of their topic
- it was really good hearing from the 'experts'.

Concluding Remarks

The T@T series has been well attended and attracted a wide range of attendees from across the University, with different levels of experience and from a wide range of learning and teaching roles.

The on-line survey and interviews have provided an insight into attendees' motivations and interests and has provided a small number of examples of impact. It is difficult to draw strong conclusions but it appears that people are particularly valuing:

- 1 hearing from a published expert in the field
- 2 having a diverse set of learning and teaching topics addressed
- 3 the opportunity to reflect on applicability to own teaching context
- 4 the opportunity to network and discuss with colleagues.

It also appears that the length and format of the events are generally popular whilst there is a need to select dates with care and where possible avoid teaching days.

Care also needs to be taken when advertising the sessions to avoid misinterpretation and differing expectations.

Overall the T@T seminars seem to have provided an appreciated opportunity to think about teaching in a stimulating and supportive environment. Attendees are attracted to attend by specific topics and specific 'big name' presenters and this should be maintained in future scheduling.

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