
Capacity Building For Online Education In A Dual Mode Higher Education Institution

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Abstract

This paper outlines the strategies employed by the Graduate Programmes Department of the University of the West Indies Open Campus to build capacity among academic staff to facilitate their transition to online teaching and learning. The strategies covered relate to course development and delivery, including activities that emerge at the interface of these two areas. The paper also briefly addresses the monitoring and facilitating skills required in this context. The paper concludes with a few recommendations, including the need for open discussion on the way forward for dual mode institutions.

Introduction

Dual mode higher education institutions have been in existence for much of the twentieth century in countries with large land masses (Daniel, 2012). In the case of smaller countries, in particular those of the developing world, it was only towards the end of the century that the traditional campus-based institutions began implementing measures to expand their institutional reach through distance education (Renwick, King and Shale, 1991; Renwick, Shale and Rao 1992; Muyinda, 2012). In most cases, these measures entailed the creation of specially designed structures staffed by a new cadre of professionals who were expected to work with the existing teaching staff to transform programmes and courses for distance delivery.

The introduction of the information and communication technologies into higher education brought new challenges for the dual mode institutions as further adjustments were required to transition from traditional modes of distance delivery to online teaching and learning. Hope (2006) makes the case even more strongly. She asserts,

Moves from face-to-face or traditional distance education to online education represent significant changes in the assumptions on which teachers, learners and support staff go about their business and to the technological infrastructure and skill base that support the moves. (p.6)

She therefore proposes a best practice framework for online education and as a forerunner, she outlines the core differences among the three delivery modes in use in higher education, namely face-to-face, conventional distance education and online education. She describes the first as being teacher-centred, the second resource-centred and the third learner-centred. She then articulates the five characteristics that differentiate one mode from another. For the purposes of this paper, the focus will be on the latter two modes and on three of the five attributes, all three of which highlight the role of materials.

Table 1: *Abridged version of Hope's best practice framework for online education*

Distance education (resource centred)	Online education (learner-centred)
Instruction contained in	Instruction based on access, materials and interactions – all can be

materials	cumulative
Materials are scheduled	Asynchronous opportunities, choice determines [scheduling]
Materials support learner	WWW-based resources produced just-in-time by (and for) teachers and learners.

Two observations can be made of the above characterizations of these two learning modes. With regard to distance education, one could readily see the attributes of the industrialization mode and by extension the Fordist orientation to the development and delivery of distance education. The materials were centrally produced, were based on pre-established standards, and very likely developed by a small group of skilled workers. By contrast, online education offers greater flexibility, choice and real-time decision-making, attributes that are consistent with the post-Fordism outlook of the digital era (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright and Zvacek, 2009). Many theorists and practitioners also view the latter mode as being more in keeping with the fundamentals of open learning and in particular with those aspects that emphasize learner development.

The second observation follows on from the first and draws attention to the implied perspective in the classification that one mode is learner-centred and the other is not. While acknowledging the limitations inherent in the development and management of distance education of the industrialization era, one cannot say that it was completely devoid of concerns about the learner. There were theorists who developed strategies to guide the teaching-learning transaction, given the separation between learners and the teaching institution. For example, there was Holmberg's guided didactic conversation (Holmberg, 1989 in Garrison, 2000) and Michael Moore's three types of interaction as well as his theory of transactional distance (Moore and Kearsley, 1996). The position taken in this paper is that Hope's rigid divide between distance education and online education does not take much of current practice into account. Each dual-mode institution must determine an appropriate approach to the practice of online education given available resources and its capacity to facilitate the transition of its academic staff to the requirements of the new teaching-learning mode.

This paper will therefore seek to outline the measures taken in the Graduate Programmes Department (GPD) of the University of the West Indies Open Campus (UWIOC) to build professional capabilities to support the offering of online postgraduate programmes.

Background

In 1996 the University of the West Indies set up the UWI Distance Education Centre (UWIDEC) to facilitate its transformation into a dual-mode institution, thereby making it possible for it to offer its programmes to a wider cohort of students beyond the walls of its three campuses and in particular to potential students residing in the supporting countries in which there was no physical campus. Eventually in 2008, UWIDEC along with two other outreach units, namely the School of Continuing Studies (SCS) and the Tertiary Level Institutions Unit (TLIU) merged into the UWI Open Campus (UWIOC).

The UWI Open Campus

The intended purpose of this fourth campus, as set out in the fourth strategic aim of the University's five year Strategic Plan for the period 2007-2012 was " to enable the University to expand the scope, enhance the appeal and improve the efficiency of its service to the individuals, communities and countries which it serves" (STRIDE, p.22).

In order to achieve this overall aim the University would,

- Build required structures and institutional capacity for an open and flexible learning environment.
- Enhance service to communities.
- Establish a viable and sustainable financing mechanism for the UWI Open Campus.
- Create a student-centred environment to foster a high level of student satisfaction. (STRIDE, p.22)

Almost concurrent with the launching of the 2007-2012 Strategic Plan, the University laid out its official *Policy for Online, Distance and Multimode Learning*, more commonly referred to as the *eLearning Policy*. Implementation of the Policy would largely centre on the operations of the Open Campus as reflected in the following statement of the document:

[As] of Academic year 2008/2009, the Open Campus shall be the vehicle through which online programmes are delivered to students not studying at or attending one of the pre-existing campuses. Thereafter all new courses and programmes delivered to these students shall be developed by and/or in conjunction with the Open Campus. (UWI FGP.P.16D, 2009, p.3).

The Open Campus began operations in 2008. All programmes at that stage were previously offered by UWIDEC, using a blended mode. In the ensuing years, the Open Campus would introduce other programmes for online delivery and just as the ones inherited from UWIDEC, it carried sole responsibility for these offerings. It should be emphasized at this stage that, while the e-Learning Policy included the idea of joint offerings between the Open Campus and teaching departments of the other campuses, this arrangement had not yet come into effect.

The Academic Programming and Delivery Division

The Academic Programming and Delivery Division (APAD) was the unit set up to manage the development and delivery of the UWIOC's programmes. Between 2009 and 2012, the period that is the focus of this paper, APAD comprised four departments, namely the pre-university and professional development programmes department, the undergraduate programmes department, the graduate programmes department and the special projects department. The first three were defined as academic departments and performed similar functions relative to the level of programming each was responsible for. The following introductory remarks of the job description for the department head provide a useful overview of the role and function of all three departments.

The three academic departments are responsible for the planning and designing of new programmes, managing existing programmes, developing and producing courseware employing a variety of distance and classroom formats and methods, managing the delivery of courses, supervising part-time faculty engaged in the learning environment and evaluating the quality of our programmes, courses and faculty supporting our students. (UWIOC Academic Heads job description, April, 2008).

The following extract from the same job description provides important additional information about the operations of the respective departments:

The Head of each Academic Department manages the planning, development, design and delivery of academic programmes offered to students wishing to matriculate in a certificate, diploma or degree programme that is offered by UWI or to those seeking an opportunity to enhance and enrich their professional lives through lifelong learning experiences. (UWIOC Academic Heads job description, April, 2008).

In light of the foregoing, all three were similarly staffed with a department head; programme coordinators who were responsible for programme development and the monitoring of programme delivery; curriculum development specialists, responsible for assisting content specialists in course development; and administrative support staff. Each department also retained the services of part-time academic staff to function as course developers, course coordinators and group facilitators (tutors). The operations of the three academic departments were facilitated by technical support teams that were also part of APAD. All Department Heads reported to the Director of APAD and with the Director as Chair, comprised the APAD Management Committee.

The Graduate Programmes Department

The issue of institutional capacity building will be discussed in relation to the Graduate Programmes Department (GPD) of which I was the Head from its inception in 2009 to my retirement in September,

2012. Unlike the other departments whose programming operations continued the work of one or other of the pre-UWIOC units, the GPD was a completely new entity as there were no postgraduate offerings at a distance prior to the launch of the Open Campus.

During the period under review, the GPD offered three Masters' programmes and one postgraduate diploma. Two of the Masters' programmes began delivery in January 2010 and the third in September 2012. The postgraduate diploma was launched in January 2011. As is the case for all UWIOC offerings, the main delivery vehicle was the asynchronous web-based learning management system, *Moodle*, to which was subsequently added the synchronous web-conferencing tool *Blackboard Collaborate*. Each graduate course was designed for delivery around the following core features:

- Fully developed self-study materials with accompanying resources and built-in activities for self-assessment.
- Overall management by a course coordinator
- Links to other sites to facilitate student-initiated searches
- Required interaction throughout the study period among the learners, and between learners and group facilitators
- Learner participation in specially designed collaborative activities.
- Continuous assessment with informational feedback

The programmes were delivered over three 13-week trimesters in a calendar year. It can be argued that the GPD model of online delivery contains elements of both the resource-centred and learner-centred modes of Hope's 2006 classification, described earlier.

More specifically, it reflected the perspective of Stodel, Thompson and MacDonald (2006), who, citing Thompson and MacDonald (2005), highlight the benefits to be derived from "a well-mapped out course" that also has "the flexibility to respond to emerging learner needs" (p.11).

In essence the approach adopted by the GPD for managing the online teaching-learning transaction sought to strike a balance between structure and guided instruction on the one hand and flexibility and learner choice on the other. One can also say that it reflected the duality of Dron's (2007) interpretation of resource-based learning as outlined in his broader description of control in the teaching-learning transaction (p.142).

Against that background, this paper will focus primarily on strategies for building the capacity of the GPD part-time staff, namely course developers, course coordinators and group facilitators (tutors) to facilitate this orientation to online education for the graduate students of the UWI Open Campus. At a secondary level it will also make some remarks about the supporting role of its own fulltime staff, namely programme coordinators and course development specialists.

Building Capacity in the Graduate Programmes Department

As in many contemporary dual-mode higher education institutions, the academic function of a department like the GPD is substantially different from that of its more established discipline-based counterparts in the rest of the university. The latter are typically regarded as the primary generators of the institution's academic product, whether in teaching or research, and have traditionally seen themselves as being solely responsible for inducting students into the knowledge domain of the respective disciplines. Essentially therefore, the GPD was seeking to build capacity in an environment in which it was also seeking to change conceptions about teaching and learning.

This paper seeks to outline some of the strategies adopted by the Graduate Programmes Department to support the work of the content specialists who, in the online teaching-learning environment, must transition from their familiar roles of lecturers in order to function as course developers or course coordinators and group facilitators. In this regard, it describes selected course development and course delivery strategies and draws attention to the overlap between the two. Finally, it makes some observations about the monitoring and facilitating role of the curriculum development specialists and programme coordinators, the fulltime staff of the GPD.

Course Development Strategies

Smith (2008) makes the point that 'development and facilitation are independent activities in Web-based courses' (p.15). In the pre-delivery activity of course development, curriculum development specialists work with content experts to create course materials for a given course. The exercise may entail creating the course from scratch or alternatively transforming an existing course into a mode/format appropriate for online delivery. Whatever the starting point, every effort is made to start the process with a brief training session during which course developers are introduced to the various elements of the course development process. Thereafter, the curriculum development specialist works with the course developer in a one-on-one relationship until the intended output is realised.

A key goal of open and distance learning is that learners must actively participate in their learning and should not be passive recipients of information handed to them from external sources. In this regard, many ODL practitioners advocate a constructivist approach to learning, one "in which knowledge is constructed through active engagement (sense making) with ideas and phenomenon" (Comeaux and McKenna-Byington, 2003, p.349). Kanuka and Brooks (2010) assert that, in order for university graduates to be "capable and competent practitioners" learning cannot be restricted to "information transmission" and that "knowledge [must be] actively constructed, contextual, embedded in prior experiences and [be] reflective" (p.78). The course development strategy used by the GPD sought, as far as possible, to reflect these goals.

Developing the Course Plan

The process entailed the development of a course plan, which then formed the basis for the development of the materials. Preparation of the course plan was based on a series of templates that collectively defined the course. They were:

- Developing the course overview
- Learner analysis
- Exploring the content
- Determining teaching-learning strategies and selecting media
- Assessment Strategies
- Structuring the course: from module to unit to session. (APAD-GPD, 2009)

While the term 'content' should apply to all elements of the course, it was used in the GPD course development exercise to refer to the body of information that students must engage with in order to build and expand their own knowledge base. In that regard, the GPD felt that special attention should be paid to the treatment of content in the development of the course so that the materials themselves would, as far as possible, facilitate learners' active engagement with the content and minimise tendencies towards passive acquisition of information.

Following are selected excerpts from this aspect of the course development exercise.

The course overview – placing the course in context.

According to the GPD's course plan, there are three elements that constitute the Course Overview – placing the course in the context of the programme, describing the course and writing the course objectives. Being able to locate the course within a wider knowledge domain was expected to enhance students' ability to appreciate the multi-layered nature of knowledge.

Following is an excerpt from a video presentation developed to guide the completion of the Course Overview template. *1*

This course belongs to this programme and as such, its identity is defined by the programme. It also contributes to shaping the identity of the programme, so in a sense, it's a sort of two-way relationship ... What do we mean by identity? That brings into [focus] the

issue of the knowledge domain. The programme itself would be drawing on a wider knowledge domain and the course is focusing on some aspect of that broader knowledge domain. So as you are placing the course in the context of the programme, you are mindful of the body of knowledge that the programme is representative of and the particular aspect of that body of knowledge that this particular course is dealing with. ... Context also has to do with the linkages among the courses. How does this particular course link up with the other courses or with some of the other courses? Very likely the courses in this programme are grouped into clusters. Does your course belong to a particular cluster? How does your course fit into the cluster? ...

Context may also have to do with theoretical orientation. What, if any, is the theoretical underpinning of your course that informs the content of your course? Or if there is no strong theoretical underpinning, what is the particular knowledge area that it is reflective of? (APAD-GPD, 2012a).

Fleshing out the knowledge types.

Course developers were also encouraged to examine the knowledge base of their courses from the angle of the types of knowledge embedded within the content. While this approach is largely informed by the objectivist tradition, developers were guided to go beyond that perspective and include a wider range of knowledge types. It was felt that this activity could provide an important additional dimension in the generation of the content, which could enhance students' meaning-making processes.

Following is an excerpt from a video presentation entitled "Exploring the content" that was developed to guide work on the related template:

What do we actually mean when we talk about the content of the course? Any course is built around its content, and so the question at this stage is, what is the content of the course? Now, we normally think of this in terms of the body of information that makes up the course and that is correct. But I want you to look at it from an additional point of view – as the types of knowledge that make up this body of information. Even though the body of information may be different for different courses ... you will usually find the same types of knowledge [across all courses]. And it is good to look at the content from this angle because it gives you an additional dimension ... that you can manipulate to make learning appropriate [and] relevant for the student.

*What are those types of knowledge? You have **theories**. We talked about the theoretical framework in the course overview. **Concepts** – we'll come back to that. **General themes** that run through the course. **Skills and competencies**. You will have **factual information**, things that describe [or] explain. **Procedures**.*

*You will have knowledge that is not necessarily in a book, or a journal article, but you know from experience that this kind of knowledge is important. The **real world knowledge** I call it. ... There are **issues** – some of it [will be] a part of the literature but some of it may not be ...*

*And then there are **new bodies of knowledge**, that some ... practitioners [and] theorists are just tapping in to, that may not yet be a part of the literature... So these are different [ways] of looking at the content of the course ... (APAD-GPD, 2012b)*

Paying attention to all dimensions of course development activity.

In a third aspect of the treatment of content, a framework was provided to ensure that course developers were addressing all facets of the course development undertaking, including identifying and using all possible sources for developing the content and introducing different perspectives in the treatment of the content. Following are excerpts from a power-point presentation titled, "Your voice in the development of course materials"

Table 2: *Your voice in the development of course materials*

SLIDE NUMBER	SLIDE TEXT
Slide # 3	<p>Classifying sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unstructured (everyday experiences) • semi-structured (primary sources – e.g. blogs, letters) • structured (secondary sources – e.g. e-books, instructional materials)
Slide # 6	<p>Your voice as course developer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • designing learning experiences • providing learner support • developing assessment tasks • creating teaching text.
Slide # 7	<p>Your voice in the development of teaching text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • select and organise excerpts from existing sources to present new unit of information walk students through a process, operation or skill • compare and contrast different views on a single topic or issue [in order to] generate new perspective • analyse a concept, drawing on different interpretations • comment on [or] evaluate [an] idea, practice [or] perspective. (APAD-GPD, 2010a).

Course Delivery Strategies

The term 'facilitating learning' is widely recognised as the activity that practitioners, directly involved in the teaching-learning transaction, engage in as they assist students in realizing their learning goals. One framework that is widely acknowledged for defining the teaching-learning transaction in the web-based environment is the Community of Inquiry (COI) model (Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2000).

According to the authors, the COI model comprises three elements, namely cognitive presence, social presence and teaching presence. Teaching presence comprises two general functions, namely the design of educational experiences, and facilitation. They state further that it is a means to an end, in that it supports and enhances social and cognitive presence "for the purpose of realizing educational outcomes" (p.89). (p.90). Stodel, Thompson and McDonald (2006), concur that the findings of their study support the model and, in an implicit support for learner facilitation, make the further point that "cognitive presence requires guidance, support and nurturing; it does not just happen" (p.16).

The challenge that all institutions face is that they must delve into the term 'facilitating learning' to identify the sub-tasks, which, when re-combined, define the overarching activity. APAD retains two levels of part-time staff for course delivery, namely course coordinators and e-tutors (referred to as group facilitators in the GPD) who carry out a range of functions that are spelt out as responsibilities and duties in the *Statement of Work and Performance Guidelines* in the employment contract for each. These are repeated, updated and expanded on in various materials developed to provide more detailed guidelines for the performance of each category of staff (e.g. Group Facilitator's Guide, 2010b)

Course coordinators are contracted to provide overall management of the teaching-learning activities of the course while group facilitators are required to interface directly with a group of students, under the guidance and supervision of the course coordinator. Students registered for a single course are typically divided into small groups of about 20. At a wider more inclusive level is the GPD member of staff, the programme coordinator, who must ensure that the highest possible standards are maintained in programme delivery.

Course Delivery Monitoring Tools

It soon became evident that providing guidelines through manuals and handouts did not guarantee that the tasks would be done or that they would be done at the required standard. The GPD therefore formalised procedures to monitor the activities of both course coordinators and group facilitators. After a review of a pilot, two instruments were developed, one to be used by the course coordinator to monitor the work of the group facilitator and another for the use of the programme coordinator to assess the work of the course coordinator. (APAD-GPD, 2012c)

While the tools have been identified as monitoring tools, more fundamentally, they were intended to provide a set of shared principles that could form the basis for on-going dialogue among these practitioners about the teaching-learning transaction.

Course Coordinator Tool

The course coordinator tool comprised four sections. The items of all sections were to be scored on a 3-point rating scale of adequate, partially adequate and inadequate. The four with a selection of items from each are as follows:

- *Criteria for assessing facilitator management of online classroom:*
 - *Maintains a regular and consistent presence in the classroom*
 - *Uses appropriate techniques to sustain participation and minimise lurking.*
 - *Clearly sets out expectations at the beginning of the course.*
 - *Provides reminders to assist students to keep up with course schedule.*
 - *Pays attention to non-participating students.*
 - *Posts grades on time.*
- *Criteria for assessing moderation of course-related exchanges in discussion forums*
 - *In responding to students' postings, identifies some area as basis for extending the discussion*
 - *Uses probing questions to get students to clarify, expand, correct information provided and/or views expressed*
 - *Makes connections between postings of different students in order to generate additional discussion points*
 - *Draws attention to relevant content from course materials or other sources if and where applicable in the discussion*
 - *Brings closure to the discussion in an appropriate manner*
- *Criteria for assessing informational feedback on written assignments*
 - *Uses a friendly, conversational writing style*
 - *Highlights aspects of work that demonstrate good understanding of the requirements of the task*
 - *Clarifies misconceptions, misinterpretations and/or inaccuracies*
 - *Directs students to course materials and/or other relevant materials*
 - *Comments on technical quality of work (e.g use of language, sequencing of ideas, paragraphing, referencing)*
- *Criteria for assessing use of Blackboard Collaborate (web-conferencing software)*
 - *Organises BbC sessions to explain course content*
 - *Uses BbC to assist students in planning assignments*
 - *Arranges for students to use BbC for their small group study*

A fifth section required the course coordinator to describe in 50-75 words, the main strengths of the group facilitator and the areas that needed to be improved.

Programme Coordinator Tool

The second monitoring tool for the use of the programme coordinator was divided into two sections, and consisted entirely of open-ended items. Items in the first section required the programme coordinator to comment on different aspects of the course coordinator's performance. Those in the second set of items were designed to solicit his/her assessment of specific aspects of course delivery. Following are the

selected items from each section:

- *Section A: Evaluating course coordinator performance*
 - *Use of the course coordinator forum*
 - *The appropriateness and effectiveness of all assessment tasks developed*
 - *The appropriateness of rubrics and grading schemes created.*
- *Section B: General assessment of delivery*
 - *Your one-on-one communication with the course coordinator*
 - *The quality of the interaction in both the general and content-related discussion forums.*
 - *The use of the Blackboard Collaborate tool in general and with special emphasis on its use for collaborative activities.*

Overlap of Course Development and Course Delivery Functions

Earlier, we underscored the consensus position within the field that successful implementation of online education requires that course development must precede course delivery. Notwithstanding that reality, the GPD also recognized that the inherent overlap between the two functions could be exploited both for the benefit of the overall operations and equally important for the enhancement of the quality of the human resource. Even though course development and course coordination were recognised as two separate contractual obligations, the GPD instituted the practice of retaining course developers to continue as coordinators of the courses they developed. This was considered appropriate for several reasons. While it is likely that all content experts would have knowledge of the domain from which the course was developed, not all content experts would conceptualise the course to be taught in the same way even if working from the same course outline. Indeed, as stated earlier, course developers were encouraged to insert their own voice into the creation of the course materials. Consequently, it is hardly likely that another content expert would be as familiar with the course as developed as the person who actually developed it. If, ultimately, it became necessary to change the course coordinator, one of the existing group facilitators would normally be able to fit into this role without too much disruption.

One other benefit to be derived from having the course developer transition into the role of course coordinator is that one would be building a cadre of fully-rounded professionals who would have developed skills in both the development and delivery of online courses.

The overlap also benefited the functioning of the GPD fulltime staff, namely the programme coordinators and curriculum development specialists. There is a point at which their roles overlap as the course development exercise is coming to a close and preparation for delivery begins. In cases where a new course is being offered for the first time, the programme coordinator would need to liaise with the curriculum development specialist to get a sense of the content and structure of the course as the former sets about to guide the new course coordinator in the development of the online teaching-learning site in the Open Campus' Learning Exchange (Moodle).

The two fulltime staff will also need to liaise as the programme coordinator guides the development of the course delivery schedule and the assessment plan as required by the GPD at the start of the term. Moreover, where adjustments needed to be made to an existing course, even though these were handled at the level of the course coordinator, working in conjunction with the PC, the GPD considered it useful for the CDS to keep abreast of these on-going adjustments since such information would be pertinent when the course became due for full review and re-development.

Joint Responsibility for Developing Student Research System.

One project that benefitted significantly from CDSs and PCs sharing the same space was the joint effort to plan for and implement activities to orient students and supervisors to their respective roles in the conduct of student research. The main responsibilities of the GPD staff team were as follows:

- Advertise for and select supervisors.
- Plan and coordinate orientation activities for students and supervisors
- Produce guidelines for supervisors and students respectively

- Identify Research Project Coordinator
- Receive and conduct preliminary assessment of students' research topics
- Assign students to supervisors.

The multi-part activity benefitted from having both sets of skills combined in planning and executing training and other orientation initiatives, and developing manuals. It also helped in the design of the structure that would facilitate students' undertaking of their research projects and defining the role of the Research Coordinator who would monitor supervisors in their role of supporting and guiding the student-researchers.

The Monitoring and Facilitating Role of the GPD Academic Staff

Even though the CDS or the PC does not himself/herself generate the output, and is not contractually bound to do so, there is an implicit understanding that, as fulltime UWIOC staff, he/she is the intermediary between the OC and the contractor and is therefore obligated to manage the relationship with the course developer and the course delivery staff in a manner that ensures that the UWIOC's goals are realised.

Earlier, we drew attention to the skills and knowledge required for the successful implementation of course development and delivery. In this regard, we referred specifically to the roles and responsibilities of the course developers, course coordinators and group facilitators. It should also be noted that the same skills and competencies informed the monitoring and facilitating role of the CDSs and PCs as these fulltime members of staff interacted with and guided the work of the part-time practitioners.

The extent to which courses were developed and delivered to the desired standard, depended to a significant degree, on the capacity of the CDS or PC to assist their counterparts in drawing on and making use of the task-related knowledge and skills to enhance the quality of their work. Their monitoring and facilitating role also depended on their ability to manage the interpersonal communication through which the knowledge and skills were shared.

It can be argued that the working relationship between the GPD's fulltime and part-time staff was showing early signs of a learning organisation, one of the key features of which, according to Kumpikaite (2008), is 'continuous learning and improvements'. The author describes this feature as "employees [sharing] learning with each other and [using] a job as a basis for applying and creating knowledge" (p. 26).

Some Final Thoughts

Even though no systematic formal evaluation was conducted on the three-year operation, there was sufficient feedback from the teaching staff and students to suggest that there was some measure of satisfaction. Nonetheless, it should also be acknowledged that implementation was not always smooth; some of the challenges included lapses in interdepartmental communication and problems in hiring part-time staff in good time.

In terms of the strategies themselves, one area that stood out as requiring focussed attention was assessment. In particular there was need for course coordinators to set clearer criteria for assessing learner performance and applying same in a manner consistent with overall course objectives.

In the context of the UWI as a whole, other issues come into focus. Earlier, we referred to the UWI's e-Learning Policy and its mandate that programmes offered online for a distance audience should be done either by the Open Campus and/or in conjunction with other campuses. Up to the end of the review period that this paper covers, the amount of online programmes in the second category was negligible. What this meant is that the higher proportion of the academic staff retained for the development and delivery of the GPD's offerings were part-time staff sourced from outside the University. While not discounting the benefits to be derived from building a pool of part-time staff, it can also be argued that institutional strengthening for online education will not be adequately served if the academic/teaching departments and by extension the teaching staff of those departments do not play a more prominent role

in the offering of the University's online programmes.

While the focus of this paper was the UWI and its Open Campus, capacity building for online learning in higher education must also be viewed in the context of emerging perspectives on dual mode institutions. In this regard, some issues raised by Daniel (2012) warrant attention.

In questioning their future prospects, the author notes "most traditional public higher education institutions seem half-hearted about e-learning" (p.90) and that most of these institutions are focusing on their research output since "research performance has come to be the main criterion for designation as a 'world-class' university" (p.91). Citing Bates (2011), he notes further that the for-profit sector was gaining ground in online teaching and that "if public institutions do not step up to the plate, ... the corporate for-profit sector will" (p. 91). Against that background, Daniel strongly recommends that dual mode institutions should embrace the use of Open Education Resources (OERs), which, inter alia, would avoid "teachers having to re-invent the wheel for each course" (p.92).

All these new developments in higher education and their likely impact on the approach to building capacity for online teaching and learning warrant open and frank discussion among all stakeholders.

/ This video presentation as well as the one referred to in the following subsection, was added to the training materials in 2012; however the templates were developed earlier, in 2009.

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