APEL National Forum

Recognising workplace learning and achievement as a tool to enhance the delivery of Foundation Degrees

Summary of Proceedings, London, 22 July 2004

Introduction

Professor Simon Roodhouse, Chief Executive, University Vocational Awards Council

APEL as a tool is on the whole ignored in UK higher education. It is critically important, not only with new qualifications like Foundation Degrees (FDs), but also more widely in terms of developing the workforce. FDs are our starting point, but we can broaden out into other areas of investigation and understanding. We are grateful to Edexcel for sponsoring this work.

The forums stem from a report published by UVAC today – *Bridging Rhetoric and Reality: Accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL)* – funded by the LSC. The French experience described is of particular interest. In France APEL is enshrined in law so that every employee has a statutory right to one day off a year to prepare their portfolio. The report also puts forward a productivity model, the idea being that APEL can be used a tool to aid productivity in businesses through the recognition of learning and development. Let us examine the merits of this model.

The forum outcomes will be taken up at the UVAC annual conference which is on a similar theme, connecting with the world of work.

See Next Steps, page 8, for more details of forum process and how the outcomes will be taken forward.

1. APEL: Barriers and opportunities

*Paper by Dr Carol Costley, National Centre for Work-Based Learning Partnerships, Middlesex University*

This was the first of two presentations based on a report published by UVAC to coincide with the forum – *Bridging Rhetoric and Reality: Accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL)* in the UK by Jonathan Garnett, Derek Portwood and Carol Costley. The full report can be downloaded at [www.uvac.ac.uk/publications.html](http://www.uvac.ac.uk/publications.html). The presentation slides are given in outline in Appendix 1.

This research examined the literature on accreditation practices in the UK and in North America, Europe and Australia. The UK situation was examined in detail and it was found that most but not all universities had a facility for accreditation of some sort. Practices ranged from little activity in one department to a few universities that have whole university policy and practice. There is little consistency between universities, despite regional bodies that provide guidance. Some universities work with partner organisations outside the education sector but again accreditation activity is limited.
Internationally it was found that in British Columbia, Canada and in France there are models of good practice which exist on a national scale with government legislation that supports and gives citizens rights to accreditation opportunities. Many other countries have piecemeal systems in a similar way to the UK but there is a great deal of debate about the use of accreditation, especially in regard to access and equity.

**Paper by Helen Pokorny and Helen Peters, London Metropolitan University, and Dieter Herde, Thames Valley University**

The paper and an outline of the presentation slides are in Appendix 2.

Research shows that individuals and specific groups of learners who have undertaken the APEL process have generally found it a rewarding and even life transforming experience. Yet the practice has never been taken up on a wide scale in educational institutions in the UK. The reasons for this have been discussed in a range of studies, some of them comparative on an international scale, others more focused on the UK context.

In this paper we discuss some of the predominant themes that have emerged in such discussions, including firstly funding and legislation, in terms of the big picture, which have a major influence on what pedagogical strategies institutions are enabled to implement. The number of national bodies involved in the issues described above is also an influential factor with regard to changes in education systems.

Another major factor in the UK context is the practical and psychological divide that persists between vocational and academic education and their providers. Issues which fall under this umbrella include those of validation and quality control which in turn affect assessment procedures and progression routes for learners.

Innovations such as Foundation Degrees and Personal Development Plans would seem to offer excellent opportunities for change and development in post 16 provision. However such opportunities in the past have often led to disappointing results in the long term. The discussion focuses upon possible strategies for ensuring that innovative ideas lead to genuine and beneficial changes, so that initiatives such as APEL can be taken on board on a wide scale.

**Discussion**

*Chaired by Lily Sawyer, University of East London*

Delegates discussed the merits of the French legislative model which, although inconsistent in application, did ensure that APEL was taken seriously. All HEIs in France must offer an APEL process to candidates requesting it, and they must give formal feedback.

There was some scepticism about national regulation of APEL, with a preference for flexibility, scope for negotiation and the QAA guideline approach. HE is very good at putting up smokescreens in response to external pressures, and APEL is a prime example of that because it presses every insecurity button. Ways must be found to cut through all that, but legislation is not necessarily the answer.
Healthcare updating portfolios were cited as an example of failed regulation in this country, particularly because of a lack of supporting in information, advice and guidance. If that support were available, however, regulation could be effective. It takes time: France has been developing its APEL system since the 1960s, culminating in legislation in 2002. Change will not happen quickly; it will need to be incremental. There would inevitably be resistance to regulation by individuals in UK institutions, where autonomy is jealously guarded.

Turning to Foundation Degrees, it was noted that the rationale for Foundation Degrees was primarily to meet the needs of the intermediate skills market in the UK. However, most FDs are targeted at 18 year-olds as entry-to-work qualifications, not at employers as workforce development, not least because the 50 per cent government HE target applies to 18-30 year-olds. The relatively small numbers of older workers applying for FDs weakens the case for APEL, which institutions might in any case perceive as a threat to their funding. Yet in construction, for example, employees with a craft background who now found themselves in managerial positions and lacking knowledge in areas like financial planning were ideal candidates for FDs. APEL would be a big selling point for engaging employers, who could benefit from getting credit for their employees experience and thus be motivated to develop FDs with institutions. APEL should be promoted to employers as a tool for workforce development that can add value to the business. It is encouraging that CATS is beginning to be embedded in the thinking of policy-makers as a lifelong learning tool.

Parallels were drawn with the Schwartz report, with its emphasis on traditional A Levels, rather than on alternative routes and more mature candidates whose experience could be APEL’d. FE has considerable experience of delivering flexible provision tailored to local needs, running HNs/FDs and degrees alongside each other, with attendant progression issues. We need to investigate how APEL operates in FE. We need to recognise that APEL is an FE/HE issue not just an HE issue.

QCA’s current ‘push’ on credit, the Welsh credit framework and initiatives with NVQs were noted. With IT NVQs, for example, only one core unit must be done in the workplace. This has involved all the awarding bodies in agreeing to give credit (in the form of Accreditation of Prior Achievement) to each others’ qualifications. One of the aims is to map all the gaps in the National Occupational Standards so that colleges can easily use the system.

2. Facilitating the Development of an APEL Portfolio within a work-based learning Foundation Degree Programme

*Paper by Cathy Hull and Dr Mike Nicholls, Canterbury Christ Church University College*

The presentation slides are given in outline in Appendix 3.

The development of portfolios of learning is a now a widely used assessment tool within Higher Education Programmes. However, constructing a portfolio/profile as part of a programme is neither straightforward nor always welcomed. At the beginning students can feel frustrated with a course in
which ‘they are the curriculum’. Moreover, whilst students sometimes find that they enjoy the initial stages of thinking about their experience and describing it, they are often reluctant to move onto the more difficult one of identifying meaningful learning, and writing about it in a way that makes sense and can be assessed by others.

Although academics might well support the principles behind APEL, facilitating it can be a daunting experience and discussing someone’s life and social experiences against the level descriptors and learning outcomes of the programme can be problematic. Facilitating an APEL process requires careful planning and the development of a clear structure through which students and tutor can work, and which allows time for the kinds of issues identified above to be identified and discussed.

In this session the speakers share their experience of facilitating APEL within a work-based learning foundation degree programme.

**Discussion**

*Chairied by Ian Holden, University of Lincoln*

Delegates queried the 30 credit maximum for the PDP module, and some questioned whether this was indeed APEL because previous experience does not gain credit; that is rather a reflective learning module on personal development. The term ‘academic worth’ was also queried as reinforcing the ‘academic/vocational’ divide.

Issues surrounding portfolios and how they can effectively evidence work-based learning were explored. The production of artefacts in various forms as well as written evidence was commended, supplemented where appropriate by Viva-type dialogue – all within a quality assurance process. It is important to move away from the ‘8,000-words’ model for evidence, which deters candidates from APEL. Job roles offered one way forward, that could be discussed with employers to evidence knowledge and skills.

Questions relating to the positioning of APEL within the curriculum; curriculum constraints imposed by institutions; the primary customers for Foundation Degrees – employers or individuals?; and how higher level learning beyond the reach of reflective learning modules can be captured. The issues are complex and a lack of information, advice and guidance on APEL and work-based learning in institutions is leaving FD developers floundering. Because institutions are very different, there is no ‘one size fits all’. It is important for colleagues to share APEL experience and good practice ‘despite institutions’, which tend to be focused on numbers, because students are excited by the process.

A common definition of ‘work-based learning’ is urgently needed because the term is used to describe very different things. Skills and competence is a good starting point, including general transferable skills applicable across a number of work-related areas. It is dangerous to separate work-based learning from learning in institutions, because work does involve intellectually stimulating challenges.

An example was cited where an APEL module of 20 credits was used to develop understanding of the portfolio process. Students then go on to
complete their portfolio, for which they could gain credit for up to two-thirds of the award. It was suggested that a 30-credit rule such as Canterbury Christchurch’s should be challenged through examples of good practice elsewhere.

3. APEL and Foundation Degrees: an institutional perspective

Paper by Maggie Challis, NHSU

The presentation slides are given in outline in Appendix 4.

This paper explores issues of APEL and work-based learning from the point of view of NHSU. As a start-up organisation, NHSU has the opportunity to establish from the outset philosophies and operational systems which reflect the priorities and mission of the organisation. This sounds simple. However we all know how complex such developments can be – even if they are taking place in a small institution with a single discipline focus for potential learners in a specific learning context. But NHSU’s role is to enhance and transform education and training for all the diverse employees of the largest employer in Europe, plus those across the full range of the social care sector, using the concept of the ‘skills escalator’. Establishing organisation-wide protocols in this context sets particular challenges.

The paper outlines a little of the background of NHSU in relation to foundation degrees and show how this area of our work has been the catalyst for the development of the 10 principles on which NHSU’s organisation-wide APEL processes will be based. It then explores the natural links between APEL and work-based learning and suggests how Foundation Degrees give us the opportunity to build on and enhance existing good practice in higher and further education, challenging some of the ancient traditions.

Discussion

Chaired by Sue Cundell, University of Surrey

While institutions are happy to have ‘stipulated outcomes’ [slide 9] for their curricula, they can’t come to terms with National Occupational Standards and NVQs, which are stipulated outcomes. What we are mean by ‘stipulated outcomes’ here are stipulated by the institution. Every UK HEI is different and jealously guards its independence. This is one of the problems with APEL and progression: as soon as it is suggested that APEL might transcend several institutions, there is a problem. This is a major challenge. One way forward is though generic models that have been developed to negotiate and determine learning outcomes for awards, expressing the outcomes in such a way that they can facilitate the APEL process and attract individuals with a range of experiences. Restraints apparently imposed by QAA are a smokescreen. It is perfectly acceptable to set the programme aim and then construct a negotiated learning outcomes package which is consonant with that aim.

Student demand is a key driver. Even if an institution’s mission overtly positions APEL as a mainstream activity, it will often not be put into practice. A related issue is the low level of HEI engagement with the local and regional workforce, even where provision is heavily vocational. This is because HEIs
are already hitting their Widening Participation without using APEL. HEIs therefore need another incentive to take APEL seriously. Above all, it needs to be demonstrated that the benefits outweigh the costs. Currently there is no mechanism for costing assessment in universities. Contradictorily, however, APEL, which is essentially an assessment model, is often criticised on grounds of cost. We must get down to the bottom line and do a genuine cost analysis of assessment, which is one of the core functions of a university. While it was acknowledged that HEFCE had done a lot of work in this area, it did not compare like with like.

Institutional regulations as interpreted by a faculty or department also need to be challenged. In reality the regulations may not be as prescriptive as commonly thought and provide scope for a range of approaches to APEL. For example, programme-specific credit (as distinct from general credit) may be acceptable. There is a role for UVAC and others to build on the small-scale use of APEL by spreading good practice and promoting the QAA regulations. External examiners have an important role is spreading good APEL practice. They can be very influential and positive about APEL, but not all are in step with APEL processes. There is a case for educating external examiners in this regard so that they can play a full part in setting appropriate expectations and spreading the practice of APEL.

Practice is patchy within institutions, with pockets of excellence co-existing with reluctance to use APEL. APEL policy needs to be driven from the top. Having policies in place that were widely ignored was clearly unsatisfactory.

There were mixed views about the extent to which Foundations Degrees were promoting the use of APEL. While some saw great potential to influence their development, with APEL as a core feature at the outset, others cited examples where this had not happened because the approach was traditional rather than innovative. Although a shift from the original part-time model for people in work to the traditional full-time 18 year-old entry had damaged the cause of APEL, FDF and QAA now favour the original workforce development model. This may give the opportunity to create a big opportunity for APEL. However, the key issue is buy-in from institutions and other parties. UVAC, SEEC and others have an important role in bringing the APEL agenda forward.

**A way forward: developing APEL in the UK through a productivity model for Learning, Recognition and Development (LRD)**

*Paper by Dr Carol Costley, National Centre for Work-Based Learning Partnerships, Middlesex University*

This is a further presentation based on the newly-published report *Bridging Rhetoric and Reality: Accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) in the UK* by Jonathan Garnett, Derek Portwood and Carol Costley. The full report can be downloaded at [www.uvac.ac.uk/publications.html](http://www.uvac.ac.uk/publications.html). The presentation slides are given in outline in Appendix 5.

Drawing from the authors’ own experience and the research, Dr Costley proposed a productivity model of accreditation for the UK, called Learning, Recognition and Development (LRD). LRD would go beyond APEL and link
with organisations outside education providing people at work with opportunities to access a full range of accreditation services.

Discussion

Chaired by Dr Paul Birkett, Bolton Institute of Higher Education

‘Intellectual capital’ could be determined by an HEI working with an organisation through APEL to work with individuals and groups to identify individual and team knowledge and abilities, and where they want to go; find out what the organisation wants from its workforce, examine training facilities and offer credit for their training and suggest ways they might enhance it through more innovative practices etc. So the LRD model is essentially a diagnostic and developmental tool. It could be used with businesses to establish where everybody is in learning terms, and that could be very powerful, both for both the employer and the institution, for having identified the needs, the institution could then select and develop the appropriate learning ‘products’ to meet those needs.

This opens the door to HE engagement with genuine workforce development, which so far has been very limited indeed. Cost is a significant inhibitor, with companies reluctance to meet the cost. There needs to be a funding mechanism to assist the process. That is why the relationship with the LSC is so important, and also the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). LSCs are always looking for effective tools and ways of developing effective relationships between the learning suppliers and employers.

APEL is closely linked to appraisal, training needs analysis and professional portfolio-building. HE needs to promote the underpinning skills that APEL brings to workforce development.

Regarding cultural barriers, a paper by Laurie Lomas on organisational culture and quality assurance demonstrates how different HEIs are from each other. If you add employers to that mix you have another layer of cultural differentiation. The mutual lack of understanding between HEIs and employers can makes relations difficult and slow to develop. The LRD model was initially only taken up by one employer, Bovis, and there was a feeling that the initiative might fail. Perseverance is essential in selling an far-reaching idea like this to employers, and this raises the issue of resource: HEIs need to be resourced to undertake this work, and people with the necessary business skills.

Summing up

Dr Philip Riseborough, City & Guilds

There was a danger that a session like this will simply ‘re-invent the wheel’. Lots of people talk about the issues surrounding APEL but very few have the answer. Perhaps that is one of the key messages to come out of today – we still do not have the answer, but we do have some good ideas about how we might try to develop a way forward.

I am unsure about the Middlesex LRD model and did not personally perceive the LSC as the body to take the lead role. I suggest that Investors in People,
with its framework for endorsing company training systems to certain standards and award a kitemark, is part of the issue under discussion and might them a more appropriate body to take on board this sort of initiative. That way, HEIs, awarding bodies etc. could link in to that kitemarking process. If that were got right, that could be part of the answer to address suspicions in HE about what is actually happening in the workplace, and encourage an acceptance of workforce development initiatives which are very powerful. HEIs could then unlock that internal training in terms of credit and APEL.

We must move away from a protectionist psychology. One of the dilemmas is that we live in a competitive world where we strive to maintain our respective roles. We need to move towards an ‘opportunism’ culture, where we give people opportunities and recognise a variety of pathways to recognition and certification of learning. The APEL agenda is fundamentally about unlocking opportunities for people, enabling them to progress and develop.

We need to define in this context terms like ‘evidence’ and ‘experience’, and explore further how we get to a position where all the players are happy to buy into a common APEL framework. If we can move on and meet these challenges, today’s forum will have been worthwhile.

Next steps

Professor Simon Roodhouse, UVAC

The proceedings of today’s forum will be summarised, sent to delegates and used to inform the next forum in Cardiff on 23 September, which will comprise a different mix of people. Those proceedings, together with today’s, will then be taken forward to the final forum in Belfast on 21 October, when a greater emphasis will be placed on Further Education. We will then pull all the material together, link it to the report published today and consult our sponsor Edexcel on the outcomes. The report will go to the UVAC board and all its members and stakeholders, to ask them how they we should like us to take the initiative forward. Finally, we ask delegates to send us brief success stories of the APEL process. These cameos will be very helpful, particularly in making the case to politicians and civil servants.

Compiled by David Hemsworth, July 2004
APPENDIX 1: APEL: Barriers and opportunities (1)

Paper by Dr Carol Costley, National Centre for Work-Based Learning Partnerships, Middlesex University

1. APEL in the UK - from late '80s / early '90s
   • Programmes for adults
   • used as access
   • works well in modular systems

2. APEL in the UK
   • Not always accepted by subject-based academics
   • seen as labour intensive
   • particular scepticism from some older universities
   • sometimes gets a bad press

3. Education Guardian
   HE watchdog to investigate 'life credit' scheme
   Polly Curtis, Friday August 29, 2003
   The higher education watchdog, the quality assurance agency, is investigating a scheme that allows universities to shorten degrees to just one year by giving students credit for "life experience".
   More controversially, social work students at Glasgow Caledonian University have been given credit for having recovered from a drug addiction. The university defended the decision claiming the process of recovery was relevant experience to the course.

4. APEL in the UK
   • APEL for NVQs engages a wide range of people
   • Matches performance against prescribed occupational standards

5. APEL in the UK
   • Work Based Learning as a field
   • General rather than specific credit
   • Accreditation Frameworks with organisations

6. APEL in the UK
   • QAA Guidelines 2004
   • QA issues for current APEL systems

7. APEL in the UK at its best
   • Flexible
   • open access
   • supports and gives confidence
   • rigorous and transparent
   • robust
   • embedded in QA procedure
   • can link with organisational learning
8. APEL in the UK-improvements
- Providing information and systems
- overly bureaucratic and resource intensive
- perceived as difficult and time consuming
- lacks credibility by some
- gets circumscribed by disciplines

9. APEL Internationally
- Two approaches within the European Community
- Bologna Declaration 1998 followed by the Bologna Process
- Irregular and complex across Europe
- International Labour Office 2003

10. APEL Internationally
- France, an advanced model
- *Validation des Aquis de L'Experience* (VAE) 2002
- *bilan de competence*
- diversity of implementation

11. APEL Internationally
- Ireland
- Australia - Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
- USA- Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) organised by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)

12. APEL Internationally
- Canada’s Province of British Columbia
- A network of educators, trade unions, employers and government agencies

13. APEL Internationally
- Academic learning- constrained
- vocational learning- utilitarian
APPENDIX 2: APEL: Barriers and opportunities (2)

Paper by Helen Pokorny and Helen Peters, London Metropolitan University, and Dieter Herde, Thames Valley University

The Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) has been defined as ‘... a way to do valid and reliable assessment of extra-college learning at affordable cost’ (Keeton, 2000: 32)

and when CAEL (Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning, later the Council for the Advancement of Experiential Learning) was set up in the late 1970s in the United States this was its aim. In both the US and the UK, where Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) was introduced in 1979 by Norman Evans, it was seen as a way of facilitating access for those who had not followed a traditional educational route. In 1986 Norman Evans founded the Learning from Experience Trust: to put into action at higher education level the brief that it gave itself [...] to work on the borders between formal education and the world of work and life. (Evans, 2000:70). Key texts in developing the role of APEL were Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning and Boud, Keogh and Walker’s (1985) edited collection, Reflection, Turning Experience into Learning. Kolb (cited in Weil and McGill 1989:9) described experiential learning as:

‘the process that links education, work and personal development’

and he, as well as Boud, Keogh and Walker, focused on the processes of learning from experience. Weil and McGill (1989:3) describe the assessment of prior experiential learning as:

‘...concerned with assessing and accrediting learning from life and work experience as the basis for creating new routes into higher education, employment and training opportunities, and professional bodies.’

APEL is therefore defined as a means of crossing borders and breaking down barriers between everyday lives and formal education, bringing with it implications for the nature of higher education teaching and study, for who comes to university and for what happens when they come. It is represented as an emancipatory strategy, opening up the doors of Higher Education (HE) for a different type of student, and a challenge to the academy to look at different forms of knowledge from those traditionally recognised in institutions and to adopt different strategies in the process of assessment of these new forms. It therefore links in closely with the aims of Foundation Degrees (FDs) and the ethos behind their introduction into the UK HE system. From the outset the role of APEL was seen as a key characteristics of the award and it might be expected that FDs would become a catalyst for APEL developments in HE. However, the QAA 2003 Overview Report on Foundation degree reviews noted that,

‘arrangements for [APEL] …raise concerns in seven reviews. Although [APEL] systems are generally in place, there is only limited evidence of their use. In some cases, this is because they are not clear and students find them difficult to use, for example demonstrating that all outcomes for a particular module have been achieved. In other cases
students are not enthusiastic about [APEL] and do not apply for it...Generally student's prior skills and knowledge developed in the workplace, were not accredited at entry and industrial partners were not involved in [APEL] procedures.'

The report goes on to recommend that there is a need to address,

‘the appropriateness and effective operation of systems for the accreditation of prior experience and learning, particularly to accommodate previous work experience.'

These comments echo another survey of APEL practice in the English HE sector by Merrifield et al (2000) which found APEL documentation and policy in place in a high proportion of universities, but suggested that the difficulties in obtaining hard data about numbers of students gaining APEL credit implied a small number of students were accessing the process. The report also suggested that where institutions had university-wide APEL policies, practices are likely to be unevenly spread across the institution (Merrifield et al, 2000). This situation remains despite a long history of APEL statements appearing within the documentation of curriculum development in English HE dating back to the 1980s and the time of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). Given that the purpose of APEL is to give credit to learning irrespective of the context within which is was developed a key issue is that of reconciling the differences between learning developed through experience or practice and learning developed through formal education. This tension is central to the process of assigning ‘value’ to learning gained outside of the institution.

**Work based learning (WBL)**

Foundation degrees present many challenges to higher education, probably the most fundamental being that of the integration of workbased learning which is integral to the success of the APEL process. One of the most common sources of uncertainty cited at the 2004 Foundation Degree Forward (FDF)/ Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) seminar was ‘What qualifies as a valid work placement ?’ The answer was that ‘

‘the most successful approach tends to be one that sees workbased learning as integral to the overall programme aims and learning outcomes...threaded throughout the programme rather than being constrained by the boundaries of individual units... with negotiation set out in learning contracts. ‘

This response makes a number of assumptions about the nature of the student cohort (who will need to be engaged extensively in workbased learning) and the flexibility available in respect of the design and delivery and resourcing of the curriculum. Whilst many engaged in the skills agenda perceived of FDs as a tool for workforce development, providing progression through work and not preparation for work, the government’s targeted widening participation agenda has meant that many students embarking upon FDs are young and inexperienced in work. This makes integrating extensive workbased learning (as opposed to simulation) problematic for course designers. The re-packaging of many full-time Higher National Diploma courses as FDs further confuses the nature and purpose of the award. For
FDs operating outside of the context of large employers, securing individual workbased learning opportunities can be difficult hence recent calls by some HEIs to make this element more generic. The FDF quote above suggests that best practice in FD curriculum design is informed by workbased learning ideology whereby the curriculum is negotiable in respect of what is learned, how and when. Traditionally HE curricula are more static and prescribed with learning most frequently demonstrated through written evidence of application, evaluation and analysis. Attempts to overlay curricula with National Occupational Standards (NOS) do not appear to have fundamentally changed the nature of academic curricula, NOS appear rather to have been integrated within it through mapping exercises and further specification of the curriculum. The focus of curriculum development is often on providing underpinning knowledge to facilitate transfer of the student to a ‘top-up’ stage of a traditional honours degree programme. Workbased learning may be viewed as largely irrelevant to this progression and as such play a marginal role in the curriculum. Integration of WBL requires a need to reconceptualise curricula so that students entering through, for example, modern apprenticeships into FD and progressing through to an honours year should not experience sudden differences of expectation but a smooth relationship of progression through different forms of learning up to and including the honours stage.

**Curriculum Design**

There are a number of competing influences upon curriculum design in HE which may conflict with notions of extensive workbased learning integration. Probably the most marked influence is that of the Quality Assurance Agency with its associated benchmarks, codes of practice and specifications of learning which can result in tensions in respect of FD curriculum design. One of the most pervasive quality assurance concepts to permeate HE curriculum design in recent years is that of curriculum alignment i.e. the requirement to define syllabi in terms of a set of learning outcomes – predetermined and consistent across cohorts and across time, assessed according to consistent methods and criteria. This is clearly problematic for APEL where the learning will not have been planned with assessment in mind. The QAA need to recognise, and develop an expectation, that methods of assessment for prior experiential and work-based learning will be different from those devised for the assessment of learning in an educational environment in order to provide a valid evaluation of the knowledge and abilities gained. Whilst there are many examples of successful workbased curricula based upon negotiation of planned learning outcomes there remains an implicit assumption that, in contrast, APEL will be judged against predetermined outcomes in order to determine ‘equivalence’. The learning outcomes approach as currently applied is often too restricting for satisfactory evaluation of learning through practice. Assessment processes would need to involve collaboration between academic and workplace assessors or those involved in other learning environments such as voluntary or leisure activities. One of the keys to useful assessment of experiential and work based learning is the breaching of the psychological and practical divide between vocational and academic education. This divide is reinforced through public policy discussions and initiatives which repeatedly fail to see a role for HE in higher skills.
development. Discussion fora and collaborative development of assessment strategies between academics and practitioners are an essential step towards accessible APEL as has been demonstrated to some degree in specific examples of collaboration on the assessment of work based learning between universities and employers. This requires all agencies with an interest in FD curriculum design to be encouraging good practice in workbased learning (WBL) and APEL, setting up a national expectation that workable APEL systems will be in place. Such bodies include QAA, QCA, HEFCE, Sector Skills Councils, FD Forward, EdExcell and UVAC. The number of agencies and their different roles and remits appears to make joined up thinking in this area problematic. HEIs are provided with a plethora of templates and guidance with varying levels of commitment to WBL and APEL. In the absence of a clear lead it is unlikely that APEL will be recognised and established on a national scale.

Structure of modular schemes

It follows that modular schemes where all modules at all levels are precisely listed make an APEL claim very difficult. This provides a strong barrier to APEL. Where there is a choice of options at a specific level within a modular scheme, there is more scope for putting a claim together that covers the general subject area of the options and meets the overall learning outcomes of the level. Facilitation of APEL works best as a design consideration and not a bolt-on addition.

APEL processes

APEL processes are often criticised for being complex and difficult to negotiate. Butterworth (1992) identifies two common approaches to APEL, the credit exchange model and the developmental model. The credit exchange model describes a process by which personal skills and knowledge are matched with the planned learning outcomes of an accredited programme. Trowler (1996) calls this the credit exchange plus model, with the requirement for reflection and evaluation of the learning evidence providing the plus element necessary for an academic assessment. In the developmental model the central requirement is that the claimant reflects on, and evaluates, the learning derived from experience. The experience is viewed as a source of learning. Hence in order for learning to occur the student must reflect on the experience and through a process of developing concepts from the particularities of the experience, demonstrate their learning. Butterworth (1992) noted that the credit exchange model is reflected in NVQ approaches to APEL assessment. The developmental model as Trowler (1996) notes is more likely to find favour in academia for the following reason:

‘the developmental approach does not require academic staff to accredit a different form of knowledge from that normally accredited in higher education…There is considerable advantage in a form of APEL which does not attempt to shift the epistemological ground under the feet of those disciplines founded upon prepositional knowledge. The main one is that it is more acceptable in general to academic staff…’
These two approaches reflect the traditional vocational / academic divide wherein work-based learning is often seen in terms of skills competence and academic learning concerned with critique and reflection leading to change and development. Both are limited in their ability to successfully accredit prior learning. The credit exchange model limits the recognition of learning to that which is pre-determined within the curriculum. The developmental approach often requires students to place prior learning within an academic framework forcing students to re-package their learning to fit within the context of traditional disciplinary reference points. It is seen by some as empowering for APEL candidates - providing them with a transformative learning experience resulting from a critical evaluation of their learning experiences (Cleary et al 2002). Students with a UK professional or academic background are most likely to be successful in their claims for APEL, schooled in educational discourse, they are better able to abstract their knowledge and to evoke a conceptual or professional language with which to lay claim to their learning. This requirement to articulate learning in accordance with tradition academic conventions makes the developmental approach difficult and onerous for the student. It is also misleading. In fact the credit is not awarded for prior learning but for the value added through current reflection.

However, there is now a large body of literature which has examined the process of learning within the workplace particularly in respect of apprenticeship training. Lave and Wenger (1991) Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1999), Brown and Druid (2000) and others view learning at work not primarily as a process of reflection upon experience but as a social process. From a social practice perspective the value is contained within the experience itself. A worker will have learning that is embedded and adaptive to interactions with people, objects and activities. This is an important shift, it recognises that knowledge is not the result of post hoc reflection and repackaging but is embedded in experience and practice. It implies a need to engage fully with the individual’s working practices jointly seeking evidence of ‘equivalent’ learning which will not be available as a reflective document but in the form of activities, responsibilities, artefacts and narratives which represent learning. Within APEL assessment artefacts are often viewed as authenticating the evidence of learning as set out in a reflective document. However, Lave and Wenger (1991) point to the importance of artefacts as technologies of practice which can illuminate the extent of participation in a community of practice. Focussing upon how an individual engages with artefacts may provide useful indicators of the depth or level of learning. In stressing the importance of the experience itself as an indicator of level of learning Kvale (2004) considers how learning is assessed in a continuous formative fashion in the workplace and points out,

‘...the conflict between the intuitive evaluation of the expert and the requirements for verbal justification of evaluations...If the master is to evaluate another’s performance he may well describe the value of the performance, but be at a loss to justify his evaluation in verbalised rules and steps. Or if he is required to do so, he will have to resort to lower levels of explicit reasoning at the skill model and provide verbal justification of his evaluation.’ (Kvale 2004:9)
This reinforces the need for HEIs to engage with different models of assessment practice and criteria for APEL of workbased learning. This does not imply a competence approach but one where holistic criteria such as problem solving, judgement making can be demonstrated through negotiation of evidence of practice. This approach to APEL has much in common with those developing in France and Sweden where learning is loosely framed around relevant cognitive, practical and core skills. This approach of recognising learning in its many forms is implicit within many of the codes, models and guidance documented in manuals of APEL practice. However implementation does require flexibility and a shift in understanding about the nature of learning which is not commonly embedded in HE curricula.

**Statutory support**

It would be difficult to embed APEL nationally without a degree of compulsion and without strong support from the QAA. The current QAA draft guidance in respect of APEL is lukewarm about the process and does not position it as a key assessment principle within HE. In France where APEL is a statutory right many issues remain however Feutrie (2000) commenting upon the approach emphasises that:

‘From the moment the university agrees to recognise the fact that an equivalence can be made between knowledge acquired on the job or in life ...that university has evolved into something different...In such a scheme individuals become real actors in the field of education.’

There is a shift in terms of who is involved in the assessment. The student has to be a key player in providing evidence and mapping out her territory for exploration with the tutor. In many cases there will be a key role for the employer to contribute evidence confirming the significance of experiences held by the student. Employer representatives could identify relevant practices which could constitute evidence in order to inform APEL processes in specific sectors. Assessors could be university or employment based so long as there are appropriate training and development opportunities. A shift from teaching to assessing workbased learning could potentially free up some resources within the sector. However within a mass HE system any process which focuses upon the individual is problematic to resource. The approach in this paper is to argue that APEL and WBL are different but equivalent forms of learning to that traditionally developed within a university. This acknowledgement would require a shift in many cases in quality assurance processes in respect of framing learning and maintaining standards. At the moment this is a shift that has yet to have impact beyond that of rhetoric within the HE sector.

**APEL and lifelong learning**

There are other implications for awarding APEL credit which impact upon the HEI. APEL is one part of a developmental process, prior learning is relevant in so far as it is building towards further learning. The APEL process would lend itself to integration within Personal Development Planning (PDP) as applicants look to build on their prior learning. However, the HE sector is still funded and structured largely to support students in homogenous groups.
following a full-time course. Part-time study is often seen as identical to full-time study but at approximately half the rate of study with the implication that this remains largely classroom based. There are significant financial as well as curricular implications should the individual become a part-time student. The student would have no access to loans and would be required to pay her own fees irrespective of her level of income. University funding is not attached to credit volume but rather to whole years of study. Some significant pump priming would be required in order to engage the relevant parties in the development of systematic APEL systems.

Conclusion

The single most important factor in overcoming barriers to APEL and establishing a national system is the need for this to be recognised in national policy as a means for promoting workforce development and for funding to be allocated for the realisation of policy. This could take the form of extra HEFCE funding attached to students with experience who enter HE courses. Structures for greater involvement of external assessors could then be put in place going beyond cooperation with individual partnerships. This would foster existing links between HE institutions and their environments and establish a continuum for students between their learning prior to taking up studies, their academic work and their future goals. Foundation degrees and PDPs offer an excellent opportunity for expanding this development but all the agencies involved need to be in agreement about the aims of APEL and the means of achieving them and the credibility of FDs needs to be established in both the academic and the employment sectors.

References:


Overview report on foundation degree reviews (2003), The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.


Paper (slides) by Helen Pokorny and Helen Peters, London Metropolitan University, and Dieter Herde, Thames Valley University

1. Introduction
- In the 1970s CAEL defined the Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) as
  ‘… a way to do valid and reliable assessment of extra-college learning at affordable cost’ (Keeton, 2000: 32)
- Kolb (cited in Weil and McGill 1989:9) described experiential learning as:
- ‘the process that links education, work and personal development ‘

2. QAA 2003 Overview Report on Foundation degree reviews noted:
‘arrangements for [APEL] …raise concerns in seven reviews. Although [APEL] systems are generally in place, there is only limited evidence of their use. In some cases, this is because they are not clear and students find them difficult to use, for example demonstrating that all outcomes for a particular module have been achieved. In other cases students are not enthusiastic about [APEL] and do not apply for it…Generally student`s prior skills and knowledge developed in the workplace, were not accredited at entry and industrial partners were not involved in [APEL] procedures.’
- The report goes on to recommend that there is a need to address:
  – ‘the appropriateness and effective operation of systems for the accreditation of prior experience and learning, particularly to accommodate previous work experience.’
  – a key issue is that of reconciling the differences between learning developed through experience or practice and learning developed through formal education. This tension is central to the process of assigning ‘value’ to learning gained outside of the institution.

3. Work based learning (WBL)
- What qualifies as a valid work placement ’ FDF/QAA seminar.

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• ‘the most successful approach tends to be one that sees workbased learning as integral to the overall programme aims and learning outcomes…threaded throughout the programme rather than being constrained by the boundaries of individual units… with negotiation set out in learning contracts

4. Curriculum Design Issues
• QAA benchmarks, codes of practice and specifications.
• Curriculum alignment i.e. the requirement to define syllabi in terms of a set of learning outcomes.
• Assessment processes would need to involve collaboration between academic and workplace assessors.
• Requires a breaching of the psychological and practical divide between vocational and academic education

5. APEL processes
• Butterworth (1992) identifies two common approaches to APEL, the credit exchange model and the developmental model.
• The credit exchange model describes a process by which personal skills and knowledge are matched with the planned learning outcomes of an accredited programme.
• In the developmental model the central requirement is that the claimant reflects on, and evaluates, the learning derived from experience.

The developmental model as Trowler (1996) notes is more likely to find favour in academia for the following reason:
• ‘the developmental approach does not require academic staff to accredit a different form of knowledge from that normally accredited in higher education…There is considerable advantage in a form of APEL which does not attempt to shift the epistemological ground under the feet of those disciplines founded upon prepositional knowledge. The main one is that it is more acceptable in general to academic staff…’
• However, there is a body of literature which has examined the process of learning within the workplace particularly in respect of apprenticeships. Lave and Wenger (1991)
• Learning at work is not seen primarily as a process of reflection upon experience but as a social process. From this perspective the value is contained within the experience itself.
• This implies a need to engage fully with the individual’s working practices jointly seeking evidence of ‘equivalent’ learning which will not be available as a reflective document but in the form of activities, responsibilities, artefacts and narratives which represent learning.
• Focussing upon how an individual engages with artefacts may provide useful indicators of the depth or level of learning.
• ‘…the conflict between the intuitive evaluation of the expert and the requirements for verbal justification of evaluations. …If the master is to evaluate another’s performance he may well describe the value of the performance, but be at a loss to justify his evaluation in verbalised rules and steps. Or if he is required to do so, he will have to resort to lower
levels of explicit reasoning at the skill model and provide verbal justification of his evaluation.’ (Kvale 2004:9)

- Need for HEIs to engage with different models of assessment practice and criteria for APEL of workbased learning.
- Approach to APEL has much in common with those developing in France and Sweden where learning is loosely framed around relevant cognitive, practice and core skills.
- Requires flexibility and a shift in understanding about the nature of learning which is not commonly embedded in HE curricula.

6. Structure of modular schemes
- When all modules at all levels are precisely listed this makes an APEL claim very difficult.
- Where there is a choice of options at a specific level within a modular scheme, there is more scope for putting a claim together that covers the general subject area of the options and meets the overall learning outcomes of the level.
- Negotiation is important to flexibility in WBL assessment and HE curricula are generally pre-determined.

7. Statutory support
- In France where APEL is a statutory right many issues remain however Feutrie (2000) commenting upon the approach emphasises that: ‘From the moment the university agrees to recognise the fact that an equivalence can be made between knowledge acquired on the job or in life …that university has evolved into something different…In such a scheme individuals become real actors in the field of education.’

8. APEL and lifelong learning
- APEL is part of a developmental process, prior learning is relevant in so far as it is building towards further learning and would lend itself to embedding through Personal Development Planning (PDP).
- HE sector is still funded and structured largely to support students in homogenous groups following a full-time course.
- Significant pump priming would be required in order to engage the relevant parties in the development of systematic APEL systems.

9. Clearing and APEL claim
- APEL is used more in post 1992 Universities than in pre 1992 Universities
- Many of these recruit their students through clearing and therefore at a very late stage.
- This further emphasises the way in which access to HE is focussed on school leavers with traditional qualifications and not the development of access and progression through work-based learning routes.

10. Conclusion
- The most important factor in overcoming barriers to APEL and establishing a national system is the need for APEL to be recognised in national policy as a means for promoting workforce development and for funding to be
allocated for the realisation of policy.
• This could take the form of extra HEFCE funding attached to students with experience who enter HE courses.
• Foundation degrees and PDPs offer an excellent opportunity for expanding this development.
APPENDIX 3: Facilitating the Development of an APEL Portfolio within a work-based learning Foundation Degree Programme

Paper by Cathy Hull and Dr Mike Nicholls, Canterbury Christ Church University College

1. Part Time BA/BSc and Foundation Degrees in Professional Development (by Work Based Learning) with a chosen subject area(s)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (BY WORK BASED LEARNING)

SUBJECT AREA

Choose courses to a value of 60 credits per level from:

- AMERICAN STUDIES
- ANIMAL SCIENCE
- APPLIED CRIMINOLOGY
- ARCHAEOLOGY
- ART
- BIOSCIENCES
- BUSINESS
- BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
- COMPUTING
- DIGITAL CULTURE, ARTS & MEDIA
- EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES
- EARLY CHILDHOOD & HEALTH STUDIES
- ENGLISH
- FILM, RADIO AND TELEVISION STUDIES
- FORENSIC INVESTIGATION
- FRENCH
- GEOGRAPHY
- HEALTH STUDIES
- HISTORY
- INTEGRATED SCIENCE
- LEGAL STUDIES
- MARKETING
- MEDIA
- MUSIC
- PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & HEALTH
- POLITICS
- PSYCHOLOGY
- RELIGIOUS STUDIES
- SCIENCE OF THE ENVIRONMENT
- SOCIAL SCIENCE
- SPORT AND EXERCISE
- PSYCHOLOGY
- SPORT AND EXERCISE SCIENCE
- THEOLOGY
- TOURISM
- VISUAL CULTURE (*Other subjects may be available on demand)

LEVEL 1

- ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (30 credits)
- SELF IN THE WORKPLACE (30 credits)

LEVEL 2

- INTEGRATING STUDY (30 credits)
- METHODS OF ENQUIRY (30 credits) *

LEVEL 3 **

- DOUBLE INDIVIDUAL WORK BASED STUDY (60 credits)

* exit here with Foundation Degree

** leads to a BA/BSc (Hons) degree

2. Who is the programme designed for?

Julie Sylvester
Julie is a teaching assistant who teaches sport, especially for children with special needs. She is combining work based learning with courses from sport science and health studies for a degree in Physical Activity and Health with Professional Development (by work based learning).

“I wanted to train as a teacher and liked the idea of gaining experience at work whilst training at University.”

3. P.T. Foundation Degree and PT BSc (Hons) in Physical Activity and Health with Professional Development

Student works in Health Prescription and Promotion, Exercise Referral, Cardiac Rehabilitation or is a Personal Fitness Instructor or works with GP referrals at local authority health and fitness centre.

Professional Development

Courses from Health Studies and Sport & Exercise Science

LEVEL 1

- Accreditation of Prior Learning (30 credits)
- Self in the Workplace (30 credits)

LEVEL 2

- Integrating Study
- Methods of Enquiry*

LEVEL 3

- Double Independent Study (60 credits) or
- Single Independent Study (30 credits)**

* exit here with Foundation Degree

** leads to a BA/BSc(Hons) degree
4. Part-Time F. Deg./ BSc. in Forensic Investigation with Professional Development for Crime Scene Investigators.

**Professional Development**

**LEVEL 1**
- Accreditation of Prior Learning (30 credits)
- Self in the Workplace (30 credits)

**LEVEL 2**
- Integrating Study (30 credits)
- Methods of Enquiry* (30 credits)

**LEVEL 3**
- Double Independent Study (60 credits)
- Single Independent Study

**Forensic Investigation**

**LEVEL 1**
- Principles of Forensic Investigation (15 credits)
- Forensic Investigation and the Criminal Justice System (15 credits)
- Skills for Forensic Investigation (15 credits)
- Collection and Analysis of Evidence (15 credits)

**LEVEL 2**
- Transfer and Trace Materials (15 credits)
- Interpretation of Evidence (15 credits)
- Modelling Crime Events (15 credits)
- Measurement and Instrumentation (15 credits)

**LEVEL 3**
- Presentation of a Forensic Investigation (15 credits)
- Forensic Informatics (15 credits)
- Current Developments in Forensic Investigation

5. Recognition & Accreditation of Prior Learning

Learning outcomes:
At the end of this course you should be able to, in the context of your workplace and past work experience:
1. identify significant past experiences and critical incidents which have influenced your behaviour, actions and thought processes and which have academic worth;
2. identify and reflect upon the knowledge and skills embedded in these past experiences and evaluated the effects of such reflection;
3. express these selected experiences as concise statements of achievement, and

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4. present your evidence of this process of reflection, evaluation and audit in a portfolio of evidence.

6. Assessment:
You must submit a portfolio of evidence supported by reflective commentary which must be word processed, to the equivalent of 8000 words (or equivalent) (Learning Outcomes 1-4).

The Portfolio, for example may include:
- an extended curriculum vitae;
- a series of "critical incident" analyses;
- learning outcome statements, linked to critical commentaries on previous experience and accomplishments;
- Evidence (certificates, testimonials etc) should be included as appendices in the Portfolio and not included in final word count. Key Skills 1-4 (5,6);
- A final reflective statement.

7. What they say about Christopher Columbus:
When he started out
- he didn't know where he was going
When he got there
- he didn't know where he was
When he got back
- he didn't know where he'd been!

8. A load of old cobblers!
"I've been mending shoes for 40 years, so give me credit for all that experience"!
OR
"I've been mending shoes for 40 years, and I have learned:
- how to identify damage in shoes and the best way to repair it;
- to select appropriate materials to mend shoes of different types;
- to deal with difficult customers,
- etc.
And I can prove it!
Please give me credit for all that learning".

9. The 6 stages in assembling a portfolio worth 30 credits at HE Level 1:
1. Identify a significant event in your career during which substantial learning has taken place.
2. Identify what was actually learned, and describe this in terms of appropriate learning outcomes.
3. Provide evidence that the learning event actually took place.
4. Write a reflective commentary on the learning and say how you have benefited from it.
5. Repeat stages 1-4, two or three more times.
10. Reflective Cycle
[Graphic removed to keep down the file size. Available on request from David Hemsworth at David_Hemsworth@msn.com.]

11. Identify a significant event in your career during which substantial learning has taken place.
"What famous people must have learned"
1. In a group take a sealed envelope containing copies of the bibliography of a famous person.
2. Very quickly skim read your copy, and then as part of your group start listing the significant events in the famous person's life.
3. Now focus on what that person probably learned during their life. List a series of 3 or 4 learning outcomes for your famous person.
4. Be prepared to present your findings to the rest of the class. You must provide evidence for your speculations.

12. The Simpsons
YOU ARE (circle one):
Bart  Homer  Marg  Lisa  Maggie  Other (state who).
• List the key features of the incident: include the setting, contributing causes, actions and results
• List other outcomes of the incident
• Your assessment of the reasons for the event
• Changes made as a result of analysis
• How it has affected your attitude or viewpoint, and new knowledge or skills acquired.
• Changes made as a result of analysis

13. Investigating “levelness”
• Each group has a pack of cards. Each card has a Title and then a statement which begins "The learner: ...".
• Sort the cards into groups of 3, such that all the cards in a group have the same Title.
• Now decide which order the statements on the cards should go in. Start with the most basic statement and move on to the more advanced.
• Decide as a group which statement best describes a "graduate". Be prepared to defend your choice to the rest of the class.

14. Example of SEEC Descriptors
L1The learner:
can analyse with guidance using given classifications / principles.

L2The learner:
can analyse a range of information with minimum guidance using given classification / principles and can compare alternative methods and techniques for obtaining data.

L3The learner:
can analyse new and / or abstract data and situations, using a range of techniques appropriate to the subject.
15. Some comments from student evaluations
“I had never heard of learning outcomes. So found it confusing. Once I got started I was alright”

“The aims of the course were not first made very clear, which in turn led to a lot of confusion at the beginning of the course, however it became clearer by about the 5th week of the course”.

“As I was a little unclear of the aims to start with, it wasn’t until I ‘reflected' on the content of the course that I fully understood its relevance”.

“I struggled to understand the concept of APEL initially.....”

“I feel I have not hit the right level of reflection required, however I have done the best I can at this point of my training”.

16. Issues in facilitating APEL within this programme
- Learners can be frustrated when they find they are the curriculum
- Portfolios can be cumbersome, daunting and time-consuming to produce
- Insufficient guidance time
- Learners are often demonstrating learning at higher levels
- There is little emphasis on skills assessment
- There is little direct contact with the workplace
- Employers can be unhappy about learners sharing work-related learning issues.
APPENDIX 4: APEL and Foundation Degrees: an institutional perspective

Paper by Maggie Challis, NHSU

1. Purpose of NHSU
   To contribute to radical change and improvement in health and social care through the transformation of learning

2. Context of NHSU
   - Nearly £4 billion spent on education and training in NHS
   - Total economy of NHS is equivalent to that of Portugal
   - 40% of staff in NHS have one day or less training per year
   - Figure for those without training in social care might be as high as 80-85%

3. NHSU and foundation degrees
   Commitment to give ‘anyone who has worked in the NHS for five years or more and who doesn’t already hold a higher education qualification the opportunity to follow a learning pathway that leads towards a foundation degree’

4. The NHSU national framework for foundation degrees
   12 key principles relating to:
   - Purpose
   - Structure
   - Endorsement and validation
   - Credit accumulation and transfer
   - Working in partnership
   - Access, guidance and progression
   - Learning outcomes
   - Teaching, learning and assessment

5. Education based on ‘schoolish’ understandings (after Lave and Wenger)

   Knowledge → Transmission

   Internalisation → Transfer

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6. Education based on ‘schoolish’ understandings - problems
(after Lave and Wenger)

(Unchanged)  (Institutionalised)  (Everyday life)

Knowledge ➔ Transmission

Internalisation ➔ Transfer

Before  Now  Later/elsewhere

7. Changing the system
- Reduce focus on ‘teaching’ and research and expand potential of ‘learning’ and assessment
- Broaden range of what ‘counts’ as learning
- Take on capacity of APEL as a reflective learning process for personal, professional and workforce development

8. Control and direction

Institutional control
  (Stipulated outcomes)

Past learning
  (APEL)

Future learning
  (WBL)

Learner control
  (Negotiated outcomes)
9. Context for implementing APEL in foundation degrees
- QAA Higher Education Qualifications Framework (Level I)
- QAA Foundation Degree Benchmarks
- National Occupational Standards
- Programme specifications – aims and objectives
- Institutional APEL practices
- Valid and reliable assessment practices

10. Using APEL
- Admissions/entry
- Advanced standing (with credit)/exemption
- Professional development

11. NHSU APEL principles
- Credit should be awarded for lifelong learning, not simply for experience; experience has value as a source of learning
- APEL may be used to enable NHSU learners gain access to learning programmes; be considered for exemption from parts of programmes or seek advancement on programmes
- Experiential learning should be considered for the award of credit providing that it is relevant, at an appropriate level and is assessable
- APEL claims should be considered within the boundaries of recognised NHSU learning programmes or other learning activities, so that credit can be awarded in recognition of learner achievement
- NHSU APEL procedures should enable learners to self manage their learning activity for assessment as well as to match their learning against explicit learning outcomes for courses, programmes and other learning activities.
- APEL systems should be designed around the identification, description and assessment of learning outcomes
- APEL claims should be open to a range of assessment processes
- Credits awarded through APEL are of equal value to those achieved through other forms of assessment
- The procedures for negotiating and assessing learning outcomes from experiential learning should be explicitly within the standard quality assurance mechanisms of the NHSU
- The roles and responsibilities of NHSU staff, learners, NHSU supporters of learning and employers should be clearly specified and understood
12. Caveats
- APEL is not the best route for all experienced learners
- Appropriate information, advice and guidance
- Learners must be left ready for the next stage of their learning
- APEL credit must have parity with ‘taught’ credit – embedded into validation process
- Staff development to enable ‘letting go’ of knowledge – APEL learners are experts
- Appropriate assessment methodologies

13. If we get it right …
- We enhance access and widen participation
- We increase and improve flexibility
- We integrate academic and vocational learning, giving equal value to both
- We raise the skills and confidence of current and future workforce
- We bring about fundamental curriculum change across higher education

14. Please keep in touch
Maggie Challis
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0788 7510817
APPENDIX 5: A way forward: developing APEL in the UK through a productivity model for Learning, Recognition and Development (LRD)

Paper by Dr Carol Costley, National Centre for Work-Based Learning Partnerships, Middlesex University

1. Learning, Recognition and Development (LRD)
   - Learning, Recognition and Development instead of APEL
   - Aim for a successful national system
   - Agencies
   - Patching up Policy

2. Learning, Recognition and Development
   - Projecting Problems
   - The promotional and productivity potential of LRD
   - A cultural barrier in the UK
   - A national infrastructure

3. Learning, Recognition and Development (LRD) Productivity Model
   (see overleaf)
Learning, Recognition and Development (LRD) Productivity Model

1. Lead Agency
   - On behalf of Government Departments
     - LSC / DfES
   - Initiating
   - Co-ordinating
   - Disseminating

2. APEL Forum
   - General Stakeholders
     - Employers Associations
     - HEI Consortia
     - Trades Unions
     - Professional Associations
     - UVAC QAA
     - Policy Making
     - Political / Moral / Economic Support
     - Quality Assurance
   - HEIs
   - Individuals
   - Teams
   - Organisation
   - HEI: - Facilitating
   - Ind / Team: - Tacit / Explicit / Knowledge / Reflective Thinking / Mutual Learning
   - Organisation: - Training Provision
   - Appraisal System

3. Specific Stakeholders
   - HEIs
   - Individuals
   - Teams
   - Organisation
   - HEI: - Facilitating
   - Ind / Team: - Tacit / Explicit / Knowledge / Reflective Thinking / Mutual Learning
   - Organisation: - Training Provision
   - Appraisal System

4. Individual
   - Tacit / Explicit / Knowledge / Reflective Thinking / Mutual Learning

5. Organisations
   - Improved Appraisal System; Motivated Capable Workforce

6. HEIs
   - Widening Participation

7. Team
   - Sharing, Knowledge creation/ Use; Enhanced Structural Capital

SHARED FUNDING

Targeted Outputs

Cumulative Inputs

DIFFERENTIAL FEEDBACK