



## **Linking Teaching and Research in Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism**

### **A case study of the teaching / research / consultancy nexus from the student perspective**

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

In the preface to the recently published text *Reshaping Teaching in Higher Education: Linking Teaching with Research* (Jenkins, Breen, Lindsay and Brew, 2003) Brew comments that 'the drive to bring teaching and research closer together is perhaps one of the most significant developments in thinking about teaching and learning in higher education in recent years' (2003:ix). Undoubtedly, the current climate of uncertainty generated by the publication of the Government's White Paper on higher education has added an element of immediacy to a long-running debate over the value of linking teaching and research and how this might be accomplished. This piece does not set out to revisit that discussion specifically, although some of the key elements that have defined the terms and parameters within which this LTSN project has taken place will be referred to. Instead, the focus here is on the findings of a qualitative study undertaken at University of Gloucestershire (UoG) into the student experience of what Neumann (1994) has termed 'the teaching / research nexus'. The intention is to present student views of the relationship between research / consultancy and teaching / learning and in particular to explore the views of students studying courses in the areas of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism (HLST). Positive and negative aspects of the teaching / research nexus are outlined along with some suggestions drawn from the findings about how we might best manage the nexus for the benefit of student learning.

#### **BACKGROUND**

As mentioned above, there has been a wide-ranging, international, sometimes quite heated debate about the role and values of linkages between teaching and research in higher education. As far back as 1963, the Robbins Report argued that it was important that able students were encouraged throughout their studies to aspire to postgraduate activities and to access their full academic potential. The Dearing Report of 1997 similarly reinforced the importance of scholarship and research in underpinning teaching as one of four reasons to fund research in higher education. Clark (cited in Jenkins, Breen, Lindsay and Brew, 2003:9) explains the importance of linking teaching and research thus 'Research activity can and does serve as an important mode of teaching and a valuable means of learning...student involvement

in research is an efficacious way to educate throughout the education system the great mass of students, as well as the elite performers, for inquiring into society into which we are rapidly moving. Zetter 2002 (cited in Jenkins and Zetter, 2002) suggests that the value of linking teaching and research can be articulated in terms of three perspectives:

1. Experientially - as a process which benefits students and staff;
2. Conceptually - in terms of societal needs and the development and communication of knowledge;
3. Operationally - in terms of the reciprocity of teaching research as learning activities.

This breadth of potential ways of developing the teaching research nexus is significant for a subject area as broad as HLST in which varied disciplinary and subject field traditions and practices underpin the teaching / research nexus. Scott (2002) considers that good teaching should be informed both by teachers adopting modes of self-reflection in updating their own knowledge of research and practice in their fields and by lecturers actively involving students in research-based learning. The importance of linking teaching and research to the 'real world', in particular in vocational areas, and the active involvement of students in research are issues that will be explored later.

There are those who argue that the benefits of linking teaching and research are at the very least unproven. Ramsden and Moses (1992), for instance, found little or no evidence of a positive link between teaching and research. Similarly, Hattie and Marsh, comment that 'the common belief that research and teaching are inextricably entwined is an enduring myth. At best, research and teaching are very loosely coupled' (1996:529). Thomas and Harris (2001:248-9), however, point to five major difficulties with many of the studies that have questioned the value of linkages between teaching and research:

1. the definition of these activities affects the outcome of their measurement studies and studies based only on student evaluations may provide a one-sided view;
2. 'concern is that correlational studies often assume that complex capabilities such as teaching and research can be measured on single dimensions, which seems improbable';
3. the relationship between teaching and research is multi-faceted and thus difficult to measure with any accuracy;
4. the fact that correlations exist does not necessarily mean that causality can be established;
5. teaching may be affected by many additional factors such as appropriate modes of learning for different student groups and the resourcing available.

Thomas and Harris (2001:249) thus conclude that 'In the light of these observations, much of the quantitative research that is typical of existing investigations of this matter provides little insight'. The study that provides the basis of this case study is primarily a qualitative one (see *Studying Student Experiences of the Teaching /*

Research Nexus in Higher Education section below) that aims to shed light on the ways in which a small group of students on taught HLST programmes at University of Gloucestershire have experienced research and consultancy during their studies.

It has been suggested that over the past decade or so there has been a gradual, often structural, separation between research and teaching (McNay, 1997). In 1990 the Boyer Commission commented that despite the fact that many academics had entered the profession to teach, the route to academic status and success was now widely viewed as being inextricably linked to publishing. According to Brown (2002:30) the RAE (Research Assessment Exercise) has exacerbated the divisions between teaching and research in the UK. He claims that 'there is ample evidence that the exercise has reinforced the conventional lack of parity of esteem between research and teaching of which there is such abundant, and continuing, evidence. The RAE has also damaged curriculum innovation'. These concerns have given rise to renewed efforts to explore the ways in which the teaching / research nexus can be developed to overcome the potential problems caused by separation of research and teaching. A recent issue of the tri-annual *Exchange* publication for instance was devoted exclusively to this topic (see *Exchange*, Autumn, 2002).

A study by Drennan and Beck (2000) concluded that 'academic staff perceive research as the main route for career advancement. If teaching is to be given equal value with research, then institutions must be more explicit in their recognition, and rewarding, of the excellent teacher'. One means of doing this is, according to the Boyer Commission (1990), by recognising the value of 'scholarship', in highlighting the synergies between teaching and research. Boyer offered a now widely adopted typology of scholarships of:

1. discovery (advancing knowledge)
2. integration (synthesising knowledge)
3. service (advancing and applying knowledge)
4. teaching (advancing and applying knowledge about how to teach and promote learning)

More recently, the Department for Education and Skills stated that 'It is clear that good scholarship, in the sense of being aware of the latest research and thinking within a subject, is essential to good teaching, but not that it is necessary to be active in cutting edge research to be an excellent teacher'. Research by Brew (1999) revealed important differences in the way in which research was conceived by staff and confusion concerning which activities constituted relevant scholarship for the purposes of supporting teaching. She concluded that an understanding of these different conceptualisations could provide useful assistance in designing curriculum. As she states: 'Using research and scholarship as models for university teaching highlights the importance of preparing students to solve unforeseen problems; teaching them to be open to changing their conceptions of the world; encouraging collaborative learning including the replication of publication practices and peer review; the integration of personal issues within courses of study and developing students' professionalism' (1999:1).

It is interesting that many of us teaching on courses within the subject area of HLST may well recognise these activities as already being embedded within our programmes. Teaching and learning strategies involving the use of group working, problem-solving and reflective practice have traditionally been linked with the delivery of vocationally and / or professionally oriented programmes of study. For this subject area in particular then, a broad definition of research, encompassing key elements of scholarship, is likely to be beneficial in terms of any exploration of the links between teaching and research.

### **STUDYING STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF THE TEACHING / RESEARCH NEXUS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

The findings that are reported here are the result of two related research projects undertaken within the University of Gloucestershire (UoG). The first of these was a collaborative, internally funded, project exploring the experiences of students on taught undergraduate and postgraduate students across the University (see Healey, Jordan, Pell and Short, 2003). In this study almost 200 students completed email questionnaires (a response rate of around 8%), nearly a quarter of whom (45) were studying HLST subjects. This was followed up with small group discussions with students, seven of whom came from the HLST areas. Permission has been given for selected data from this study (those relating specifically to students studying on HLST programmes) to be used in this piece. This research was followed up with two further small group discussions with HLST students. The purpose of these discussions was to explore positive and negative experiences of research and consultancy as recounted by students and to explore the various ways in which research and consultancy had been (or might be) integrated into teaching and learning activities.

This research contributes to a growing (though still relatively small) body of qualitative research into the student experience of the teaching / research nexus. Studies that have been conducted prior to this one include: Neumann's (1994) study of undergraduate and doctoral students in different universities in Australia; Jenkins et al's (1998) focus group-based study with undergraduate students at Oxford Brookes University; Zamorski's (2000) research with undergraduate students in the University of East Anglia; Lindsay et al's. (2002) study of undergraduate and taught masters students in Oxford Brookes University and recent (unpublished) research at University of Warwick.

Examples of similar research being undertaken in the HLST area are not easy to find. A case study based on Leeds Metropolitan University's School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, by Thomas and Harris (2000; 2001) concluded that existing literature in the hospitality area was 'silent about the relative costs and benefits for students of having tutors that undertake research' (2001:246). Overall, the various studies of student experiences have identified many benefits of staff research for their learning along with some drawbacks. Within this piece the benefits and drawbacks identified in the UoG study will be discussed and resulting suggestions

outlined. The contribution of this study is that it specifically explores both research and consultancy (consultancy being deemed as especially relevant here given the professional and vocational nature of the courses involved) and that it encompasses the opinions of both undergraduate and taught postgraduate students.

In interpreting the findings below, it is important to recognise that the opinions expressed here are those of individual students and that the views of staff involved are not represented in this particular case study (focus groups have been conducted with HLST staff in another institution as part of this LINK project and will be presented elsewhere). Thus in those instances discussed here where a minority of students have commented adversely on perceived difficulties in relation to staff availability or resources, staff members' perceptions of the same situations may well be somewhat different. It should not therefore be assumed that such perceived problems on the part of individual students reflect the reality of the situation in regard to the availability of staff or resources within the UoG. When considering the results of the research it should also be remembered that this is a largely qualitative study relying on the opinions of a small group of students who volunteered to participate.

#### **ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES**

Within the discussion groups, students were asked about their perceptions of the role of universities. It was clear that these HLST students strongly associated a university education with their ultimate employability, earned through proving oneself in academic study. One student gave her reason for coming to university as: *'To further your career, to learn more...It's like a more in-depth knowledge of what you want to do in a career I suppose'*. In another discussion group the students commented:

Student 1: *It puts you into a position to get a better job when you've finished.*

Student 2: *Definitely. It's the degree isn't it? It's the end product - almost you need it to get a job.*

Student 1: *It demonstrates your commitment to learning and whether you want to learn and better yourself.*

Student 2: *It's kind of expected now that you have a degree whereas you didn't used to have to have a degree and now it's like you have to have one.*

In particular, students on hospitality courses believed that experience was valued highly by employers, along with analytical skills. As one student commented: *'I do think that experience on the job within our particular industry that we're going into, experience is valued particularly highly and what this degree does is just to allow you to think outside of your box. To be analytical...'*

The close links between a university education and employment were reflected in the way that these students had selected their courses. This was based not on academic, research-related criteria but on the perceived ability of the university to generate employable graduates. None of the students in these focus groups considered that the research reputation of a university would have influenced their

decision to go there. This appears to support the notion that in the HLST context adopting a broad definition of research-related activity and scholarship, particularly that associated with employment and industry, may be most appropriate in meeting student expectations.

#### **DEFINING 'RESEARCH' AND 'CONSULTANCY': THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE**

When asked about their definitions of 'research' and 'consultancy', students themselves defined these terms broadly and often in relation to their own experiences of undertaking such activities:

*'You really do it in every module if you really think about it, don't you? Secondary research is involved in everything that you do and there's a few modules where you are introduced, I mean the transportation issues, research methods, dissertation, small business, perhaps marketing where there is a research process that you have to follow but in everything else you know, you are educated on where you can find the information. How that information is going to help you out to answer certain questions so I guess in everything that we do at University it's all, its yourself and you're taught the process whether its formally or informally and you use that in every module that you do.'*

*'Broadening your awareness of an issue. Consulting lots of different sources to try and gain a whole picture, taking all the pieces. Looking at what's already been done, and synthesising the information, to look at the broader picture.'*

*'I suppose there's lots of different activities, I'm doing, as part of my dissertation, I'm doing a live consultancy project so I perceive that to be...you go into somewhere and you sort out all their problems and then go away and then you've made them a better business as such.'*

Definitions of research and consultancy as facets of learning within a degree is a positive finding as it indicates that, at least for this group of students, research is an active process rather than something to be passively consumed. The promotion of active engagement in research will be further considered in the next section.

A number of the students distinguished between research that they perceived to be 'academic' or theoretical in orientation and consultancy which they perceived to be more closely related to 'real world research'. As one student said: *'And there's other lecturers. I think they're more academic, like [name of lecturer] and [name of lecturer] and they more like write papers and don't do consultancy. They just do academic stuff'*. Staff who were perceived as more academic were no more or less valued by the students than those who were involved in 'real world' research. However, students did appear to be slightly intimidated by some of the more 'academic' staff, as illustrated in these quotes:

*'Maybe to an extent you're afraid to ask questions at times because they, to you, seem really silly questions and because that person is so immersed and is so knowledgeable on that topic you are afraid that the answer they give you will be so over your head, at times, so maybe there's a little bit of maturity but I don't think that's a big issue.'*

*'Because ... you kind of put them on a pedestal. It's kind of, they're doing all this high tech research and you don't know what they're doing kind of thing. They're kind of up here and you're kind of like oh God, I don't want to ask them a question.'*

*'I think if there was an academic I guess, a lecturer that did theoretical research and they had the same people skills at times, I don't know. Those people that have done a lot of work in industry I find very easy to communicate with but I think if they do theoretical research and they still have the people skills, I don't think it makes a difference. I think it's just about approachability'.*

It appears that there may be value in considering strategies to 'soften' the image of 'academic / theoretical' researchers as being less approachable people, possibly by encouraging these members of staff to be a resource for students seeking information on particular subjects outside the formal lecture situation.

In a number of instances the research and consultancy outputs and examples mentioned by students were not those that would be encompassed in a 'formal' (RAE-related) definition of research but would be more aligned with Boyer's conceptualisation of 'scholarship' as defined earlier. Students in these discussion groups did appreciate the value of journal articles, particularly as a final year resource. Articles tended, however, to be associated with the provision of more up-to-date information than that available in textbooks, rather than sought out for their academic merit.

There were slight variations in perceptions of what constituted research between groups of students from different subject areas, with Hospitality students appearing to be most aware of consultancy and project work being carried out with organisations in the hospitality industry, Leisure and Tourism students being more aware of the written outputs and research degrees being undertaken by their lecturing staff, and Sports students being aware of both published research and project work being carried out in conjunction with various sporting bodies. Whilst this may well reflect the purposive nature and small size of the sample of students in the discussion groups, these differences may be useful avenues of further exploration within the specific contexts of different universities.

In discussion groups Hospitality and Tourism students expressed particular interest in staff links with industry whether or not these might constitute 'research' as defined in academic terms. This group of students believed that an up-to-date knowledge of industry trends and businesses was very appropriate given the vocational nature of the subject. Sports students were most enthusiastic about consultancy projects,

particularly those undertaken with sporting bodies. In both instances the positive aspects of bringing the results of research and consultancy into the learning experience were associated with lecturers keeping in touch with the 'real world' and were also key in contributing an element of state of the art knowledge that students sometimes found it problematic to track down in textbooks and even journals. One of the values of having staff actively engaged in the academic community was the way in which this could be used to enhance the knowledge of students themselves, as illustrated in this quote:

*'Doing research is far better for us...they [lecturers] know everything, they understand everything...they know the people that have written other research as well...and they really understand what this person's getting at, whereas if we read the paper perhaps we don't even understand what they are talking about.'*

Here the student is identifying the benefit of staff actually knowing other people in the subject field. For the student, this means that staff can interpret current research being presented at conferences in a way that students consider more accessible.

#### **AWARENESS OF RESEARCH AND CONSULTANCY**

The results of the email questionnaire revealed reasonable levels of passive awareness of research and consultancy. Examples of this include: 59% of respondents were aware of research / consultancy information displayed on notice boards; 52% were aware of books and journal articles authored by staff and 50% were aware of research seminars and conferences being publicised. It was apparent that postgraduate students were more generally aware of the research taking place in the institution than undergraduates and that students in HLST fields were slightly more aware than their peers elsewhere in the university. For instance, more than half of the HLST students had read a research / consultancy paper or report written by one of their lecturers. However, students in the discussion groups tended to feel that they often came across information on research more by accident than by design and their awareness was significantly enhanced during the final year of their studies, as these quotes illustrate:

*'It's not very widely publicised, I mean the only reason I knew about it is when we were given the Saturday School dissertation briefing and they had that booklet and they had like what all the lecturers were and what they were interested in and what they kind of researched, the topics and that's when I kind of looked at some and went, oh, my !!! I never even knew that you know [name of lecturer] did this. So I don't think it's working as much as it could. Then [in the final year] it was kind of told to students that this is what people are doing and they're doing a PhD and they show you what they are interested in.'*

*'I mean as a student, we only know [this lecturer's] one [solo-authored book] because every time he came into the lecture he'd tell us where he'd been and what he was planning to do and it was actually very interesting and I think if lecturers were doing research it would be interesting to actually talk about it a bit more.'*

*'In one of our modules [name of module] we didn't actually have any lectures, except one at the beginning, and about six or seven lecturers came in and told them, told us, what kind of topics we might want to go and see them about, which was really helpful because you kind of think they're interested in this topic so...'*

*'...things like my dissertation tutor's been writing a book, which I know about...and it's only because she was interested in something that I was interested in that I knew she was writing the book.'*

*'You stumble across them and you think, ooh. I know that from [subject area] actually. Yes, you realise that a lot of lecturers have actually written texts and have actually contributed a great deal.'*

Students particularly valued being told about the ways in which their lecturers had engaged in research within industry.

*'Yes, you hear about it more in the third year I guess. [name of lecturer] mentioned some of the stuff she was interested in [name of module]. I guess I feel a lot closer to it, I guess with friendship groups in the third year than I have in any other year. You talk more about your dissertation and you know your dissertation tutor has an interest in that so you find out yourself about your research topic and [name of lecturer's] and [name of lecturer's] so you do find out but kind of a bit at the end. Laughter. There could be more examples and do a lecture maybe and show the work, I know when [name of lecturer] spoke about [his area of research in tourism] ... he mentioned a lot of the work that he had been involved in and some of the work he was currently involved in so it was appropriate at the time to do that and [name of lecturer] with the work that she's done. I guess it's linked to industry and so forth. She kind of mentioned that, and so lectures are definitely more interesting because you kind of listen. It kind of pricks up your ears.'*

The quote above illustrates one of the benefits perceived by students, that of added interest in their subject area where they associate the person teaching them with an up-to-date working knowledge of their field.

Generally the discussion groups highlighted the level of student interest in those who teach, not just in terms of the outputs of research but also in relation to the processes of research and the experiences of members of staff undertaking research as these quotes illustrate:

*'I think it [knowing more about members of staff] increases familiarity and that leads to understanding. If you [members of staff] can maybe just understand what it is that we're doing. Yes. If you're studying and that, you're doing a PhD but what exactly are you doing at the moment you know? What aspect... because we talk to you about our things and it may only take us one, two minutes but it builds a relationship, a rapport.'*

*'Yes rather than just being there as lecturers, it's [name]... you know them by their first name or they do this and they're struggling doing this the same as I am and I know that I really need this and maybe they need to do it too. You know, the fact that lecturers have advisers for PhDs. You know the first time you find that out you think "no way! You're advising me on a dissertation and you need to see somebody else because you are having a problem." So you can almost picture, you know your lecturer tapping on somebody else's door and go, 'can I just take two minutes?' Laughter. So maybe it's a good two way kind of you know exchange'.*

The survey results showed a particularly high level of awareness of staff undertaking research degrees in the HLST area, with over 60% of students from those fields recognising that their subject lecturers were engaged in these activities. The concept of students and staff both being learners simultaneously was one generally valued by the students in terms of its potential for sharing experiences and empathy:

*'I think it's just the way that they relate to you. If they said to you... look you know, you put them on a pedestal. I only found out that my dissertation advisor was doing like a PhD and I was like, oh OK and then they mentioned the other day, "oh God I have to go and see my PhD adviser" and you're like, "really"? I didn't even know they had one so I think I'd put them less on a pedestal and be less intimidated by them and all their research skills if they just sort of said, "oh this is what I'm doing, I'm having problems too" or if I'm not, "I find this successful, this is good."*

The findings suggest that students would like to know more about the research that staff are engaging in and how it could contribute to their studies. The issue of empathy between lecturers and students in terms of both being learners was critical here. Students felt that knowing that staff had undergone (or indeed were still undergoing) similar experiences to their own enabled them to develop a rapport which was important in their learning experience, especially by the final year of their studies.

Practical suggestions offered by students to help increase student awareness of research included:

1. Lecturers making use of their own outputs and publications (whether texts, articles or consultancy reports) as a basis for examples or learning in lecture time.
2. Using various modules as a means to introduce staff research interests to students. For instance, it was suggested that like the example above, a lecture where a number of members of staff from a particular subject area just come in and say a little about their particular area of interest may encourage students to approach these staff.
3. Students felt that they could be made more aware of specific staff research interests prior to the final year of their studies, and possibly this process could begin at the level of induction so that students are always aware that their staff engage in activities beyond teaching them.

4. Some use of notice boards as a means of publicising research events and outputs, although a number of students did suggest that many of their peers tended not to read notices frequently.
5. A compilation of staff research and consultancy CVs could be made available as an easily accessible electronic resource which was then publicised in module guides and field guides. This could assist students in directing queries about particular subjects to staff with specific interests and skills in these areas.
6. Some form of student-friendly newsletter detailing the most recent research / consultancy / scholarship activities of staff and relevant forthcoming events could be produced either at the institutional or departmental level and circulated to staff and students. This might serve to heighten awareness of a research-oriented culture.

### **BENEFITS OF STAFF INVOLVEMENT IN RESEARCH AND CONSULTANCY**

The findings of this study indicated that students experienced significantly more benefits than drawbacks in being taught by staff involved in research and consultancy. Major benefits identified by HLST students were:

- that their understanding of the subject had been improved;
- that staff involved in research / consultancy were more interesting and thus stimulated students to learn;
- that their awareness of methodological issues had been improved;
- that they had a greater appreciation of the problems faced by consultancy clients;
- that they felt more motivated to pursue postgraduate study / research themselves.

There was a continuing theme of research and consultancy being valuable in ensuring that the latest theories and ideas were integrated into student learning experiences. According to this student, for example:

*'It's terribly important from a teaching point of view that they know what they're talking about, they're up-to-date with what the research is and what people are saying about the subject, and they're making a contribution to that. It can only enhance teaching.'*

In particular the association of research and consultancy with the workplace was valued:

*'Allowing lecturers to bring in their outside knowledge of specific organisations does give an increased awareness of how that module relates to the working environment. It also gives increased respect for a lecturer, to take their views more seriously and their advice'*

The opinion that lecturers engaged in research and consultancy were better informed, had more up-to-date knowledge and were thus to be respected came through strongly in the focus groups, as illustrated by this quote:

*'Oh no, there's no doubt whatsoever that doing research is far better for us because they know everything, they understand everything and, like, they know the people that have written other research as well. They're like, "Oh yeah, my friend so-and-so who's this real, high-up lecturer..."'*

The prestige linked to staff research and consultancy extended beyond the individual to enhance the status of the University in the eyes of students and their peers at other universities:

*'You go to a place where people are actually recognised. I mean the fact that [name of lecturer] is on [the executive of a professional body], you know. You can actually think "oh yes". Yes, definitely, they know what they're talking about.'*

The links between staff research and encouragement for students to undertake their own research, both secondary and empirical, was another key feature of the focus group discussions, as in this instance:

*'It just made me more interested because of the tutor's enthusiasm for his subject.'*

*'I think the third year modules have definitely [focused more on research]...I guess research that other people have done, academics. Their kind of knowledge, their thinking. How that contributes to you know, the actions within the industry. Definitely this year. In the first year it was totally books and people had said about journals and it was like "it's too difficult to really find journals" and then the second year you kind of dabbled a little but the third year, everything that you do is just totally up to date research. What is the current thinking on this topic? You know people that spend their lives just mulling over problems and looking at different things so I think the third year modules are definitely more to, I guess to, get research done through academic journals and I guess that adds another dimension to actually doing research.'*

The most positive experiences of research / consultancy enhancing the learning experience were when students themselves were involved in these activities either through undertaking their own projects or where tutors utilised their research as a basis for lectures, as exemplified in these quotes:

*'In actual fact she [lecturer] did bring one into one of the lessons didn't she? She brought in what she had written. The research - that was used actually in the lecture. She said, 'this is what I've produced' and it was the [publication] or something about [subject area] and how it's actually carried out in the industry. One of the lessons was based purely on that.'*

*'Especially [name of lecturer]. He's...he always... he uses a lot of examples from his own research, like the module was practically based around this longitudinal study he did [number] of years ago with [name of colleague].'*

The most common experience of undertaking research or consultancy identified by students was unsurprisingly the dissertation or equivalent project. In the survey, a significant proportion of the HLST students (74%) stated that they had undertaken a dissertation or equivalent. The focus groups revealed that students benefited from such project work in terms of both learning and applying research skills. This was also the area of their studies where they were most likely to become aware of their lecturer's involvement in research / consultancy and its impact on their learning, as illustrated here:

*'My dissertation tutor has up-to-date qualifications and research material on my chosen topic which has enabled me to gain greater understanding in the subject area.'*

There were frequent comments concerning the benefits of carrying out dissertations under the supervision of research-active staff who could provide useful guidance on both relevant sources and on the practicalities of researching. Students did also discuss the value of staff using their own experiences of research (good and bad) to inform the teaching of research methods:

*'During the Research Methods module they discussed the difficulties in their own research and how to overcome them. It really helps you to realise research does not always go as you want it to.'*

The findings of this research indicated that staff actively integrating their research / consultancy / scholarship into their teaching enhanced students learning experiences. The most effective way to do this, according to these students, was through:

- encouraging students to develop and apply their own research skills with independent project work;
- allowing students to see the actual difficulties of researching as well as the tangible outputs;
- utilising staff experience of the processes of researching and consultancy work to inform student learning;
- linking research and consultancy with relevant businesses or professional bodies where possible;
- incorporating research and consultancy outputs into practical lecture tasks (such as asking students to evaluate a particular piece of work).

## **DRAWBACKS OF STAFF INVOLVEMENT IN RESEARCH AND CONSULTANCY**

Overall, the survey revealed that only a minority of students believed that staff involvement in research and consultancy had had a negative impact on their learning experiences. Just over a fifth of HLST respondents linked staff involvement in research / consultancy to a perceived lack of availability to students and just over 10% felt that staff involved in research and consultancy were less interested in teaching. This should be viewed in comparison to the much higher percentages of students who considered there to be positive benefits in staff involvement in research/consultancy (as discussed above).

The students in this project described a tension between the benefits they themselves acknowledged resulted from staff involvement in research / consultancy and their frustration in feeling that staff research was taking priority over their learning experiences as exemplified in this quote:

Student 1: *'They are supposed to be available to help you and you're kind of stuck with your dissertation or a module and you just want help, just five minutes of clarification and you think, "they're off doing their research" as good as it may be and I know it sounds sort of selfish but its kind of like, "I need five minutes and you're their doing your home work and stuff!!"'*

Student 2: *'It's almost as if "why haven't you got time for me. Why are you doing your own work when you're lecturing? You should be helping me with my work".'*

Student 1: *'Yes but then you realise you're being selfish and you do understand.'*

Students suggested a number of practical strategies for managing this situation, such as:

- regular appointment slots for staff clearly indicated well in advance and incorporating drop-in slots for which students do not have to make prior appointments;
- enhancing electronic contact between staff and students;
- setting up regular dissertation meetings for the entire period of the study at the first meeting;
- giving students as much information as possible about why staff are not available to see them.

The last point relates back to the students' interest in staff as people and the potential for empathy discussed earlier. Students stressed that knowing about how and why staff were engaged in their research activities might make it easier to accept that they could not be available for students at that time, as illustrated in these quotes:

*'I think if lecturers just tell you what they are doing and that they're under pressure too, you can kind of relate to it, they're personalising it.'*

In relation to managing potential problems related to the teaching / research / consultancy nexus, the student perspective here was that minimising the drawbacks could most easily be achieved simply by clear communication and further understanding of the multiple roles that lecturers fulfil. Ensuring that the benefits to student learning of staff research / consultancy were communicated was also important in this process.

#### **S U M M A R Y**

The findings of this small-scale qualitative study indicate that these HLST students perceive significant benefits to their learning experience to have accrued from staff involvement in research and consultancy. These benefits centre on staff enthusiasm and on their contribution of up-to-date, industry-related knowledge in the context of these vocational and / or professional programmes. Some drawbacks were identified but these were considered much less significant than the positive aspects of linking research / consultancy with teaching. The key to managing the research / consultancy / teaching nexus appears to lie in adopting a broad definition of research / consultancy (possibly to further incorporate notions of scholarship as suggested by Boyer) and in encouraging staff to further integrate their own research interests into their curriculum design. In addition, further strategies aimed at making information about the research / consultancy / scholarship activities of staff more freely available to students (for instance through staff talking at lectures and / or circulation of newsletters) may assist in limiting negative outcomes and in developing greater empathy between students and staff as learners and producers of knowledge.

#### **R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S**

Jenkins, Breen, Lindsay and Brew (2003) suggest that strategies designed to enhance the linkages between learning, teaching, research and consultancy can and should be adopted at all levels from national policy-making, through institutional missions, at a departmental level, on an individual staff basis and through curriculum design. The recommendations presented here primarily focus on practical strategies that can be adopted at the level of the department, the individual member of staff and through curriculum design. They are aimed at managing the teaching / learning and research / consultancy nexus in a way that maximises the benefits from these linkages clearly identified by HLST students in this study whilst minimising the possible drawbacks articulated by the students. Most of these ideas, generated by the students themselves, simply focus on improving communication in a variety of ways.

#### **At a departmental level:**

1. When determining the relevance of HLST staff engagement in research-related activities adopt a broad definition of 'research' encompassing scholarship (see Boyer, 1990), consultancy and, particularly in HLST, industry-related activities;

2. Use dedicated notice boards and websites as a means of publicising research events and HLST staff outputs. This should encompass staff teaching and learning achievements and industry involvement as well as the more 'traditional' RAE-related work;
3. A compilation of HLST staff research and consultancy CVs could be made available as an easily accessible electronic resource publicised in module / subject guides and field / course / programme guides. This could assist students in directing queries about particular subjects to staff with specific interests and skills in these areas;
4. A student-friendly newsletter detailing the most recent research / consultancy / scholarship activities of staff and relevant forthcoming events could be produced either at the institutional or departmental level and circulated to HLST staff and students. This could serve to heighten awareness of a research-oriented culture;
5. Further research could explore in more depth the different ways in which Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism students regard research and consultancy and its contribution to their learning experience.

**At an individual staff level:**

1. Whenever possible, make use of research-related outputs and publications (whether texts, articles or consultancy reports) as a basis for examples or learning in lecture time;
2. Staff participating in induction events could talk briefly about their non-lecture activities and their research-related interests. This may help to stimulate student awareness of a department's research culture at the start of their studies;
3. Minimise student perceptions of staff unavailability associated with research activities through:
  - publishing information on weekly appointment times well in advance and incorporating drop in slots for which students do not have to make prior appointments;
  - encouraging greater electronic contact between staff and students;
  - setting up regular dissertation meetings for the entire period of the study at the first meeting.
  - giving students as much information as possible about why staff are not available to see them.

**Curriculum design:**

1. Target specific modules to introduce staff research interests to students. For instance, at the start of a course a number of members of staff from a

particular subject area could say a little about their area of interest and encourage students to approach them for advice on that subject. The involvement of 'research active' staff in a range of modules as 'guest speakers' may help to overcome perceptions of 'academic' staff as intimidating or distant from teaching. The challenge is to present 'academic' staff as approachable and a valuable resource for students;

2. Adopt strategies that move students from passive consumption of research concepts to active engagement in research-related activities. Suggestions include:
  - encouraging students to develop and apply their own research skills through greater use of independent project work;
  - allowing students to see the actual difficulties of researching as well as the tangible outputs;
  - utilising staff experience of the processes of researching and consultancy work to inform student learning;
  - linking research and consultancy with relevant businesses or professional bodies where possible;
  - incorporating research and consultancy outputs into practical lecture tasks (such as asking students to evaluate a particular piece of work produced by a member of staff).

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