
Correction

*The following is the text that should have been printed in number 72, pages 27 - 28 in the article **Little Acorns: small scale research in the practice setting - how employers can foster research awareness** The Editor apologises for his error.*

A 'keyhole' study of university library use.

Alan Bradwell also found his study to be both daunting and interesting. He works with the new School of Education at APU and his study looked at how a specific group of students used library services.

The Education Department (now School of Education) of Anglia Polytechnic University offered, from September 1995, the opportunity for students to study towards a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in Primary School Initial Teacher Training following either a University-based or a school-based route. The school-based route was one in which the student was based in a schools-consortia which chose to purchase Higher Education services from the University: the University-based route was one in which the student was based in the University which then purchased teaching-practice places from the schools. Student time spent in the University was more fragmented for the school-based route.

The Department had been involved in another school-based PGCE route, this time for Secondary School Initial Teacher Education, since September 1993 and had now taken on its third cohort: relations between the students and the University Library were proving problematic compared to the traditional University-based courses.

Once it was decided to offer the same qualification of PGCE (Primary School Teacher Education) to two separate routes, the opportunity was there to investigate:

- whether there was a problem of Library access specific to students following the school-based route?
- if there was, did the Library service need to be adapted, and, if so would this be possible?

There was an immediate issue with the comparative size of the two primary-school routes. The University-based groups had 41 students; the school-based group had 12.

Alan describes his approach to starting work on the study:

"I had to be aware of the possibility that the consortium group might knit together to give a more homogenous response to questions than would the University groups. Discussions amongst academic staff at Course Committees indicated that this knitting together did take place.

I made a successful bid for internal funding to provide clerical support for the project. I did not bid for funds to cover my professional role. It was the first time that I had undertaken such a project and I did not know what this cover might entail. I wanted to experience the impact of undertaking research whilst carrying out my normal duties.

I aimed to use the following methods on both routes:

1. a starting points questionnaire and group discussion with students to provide background information;
2. evaluation of induction sessions;
3. evaluation of user education sessions on using the School Resource Collection (a special collection of teaching materials) and General Literature Searching;
4. monitoring of loan, renewal and overdue statistics;
5. the annual University Library Survey;
6. finishing point group interviews including a questionnaire and taped discussions.

I also utilised discussions at course committees and the external examiner's report for that academic year.

The evidence gained suggested that the school-based students were at a disadvantage in accessing the Library resources on a regular basis. The starting points questionnaire and group interviews showed the school-based students to be more familiar with what to expect from a University Library. The school-based students borrowed at a consistently higher rate and were far more successful at returning or renewing their loans on time. However, feedback from the final interview, Course Committees, and the external examiners report all suggested that the school-based students were suffering from a lack of regular access to Library resources. Many of the selections for loan were made by school-based students under pressure of shortage of time: once they looked at these selections at home, they often found them unsuitable to their needs. This mismatch between the hard data and the discussions concerning this data showed that I had been correct to balance quantitative with qualitative information.

The project helped focus attention on changing student needs regarding library support arising from the increased amounts of time spent in schools across all Initial Teacher Education courses: more consideration is now given to the impact of this time in schools on library access.

Interestingly, in the academic year following the project, the Education Department decided to revert to a single University-based route for the primary-school PGCE and redevelop the secondary-school PGCE to allow the students more regular access to the University.

As a result, although the route for which the project was designed was now redundant, the fact that I sit on course development teams in the Department allowed me to use the project to help inform my comments. The development team, in the case of the secondary-school PGCE, had to accept that Government requirements for time to be spent in schools severely affected the students' access to the Library: but the course was adapted

to ensure that the students were in the University and able to use the Library at least once per week. We were thus able to use a project based on the defunct school-based primary-school PGCE to help alleviate the difficulties of the students on the secondary-school PGCE.

Were these difficulties specific to students in school-based consortia? The answer is that difficulties of Library-access due to time in school crossed all courses, but were more severe for students in these consortia. Did the Library need to adapt its services specifically for students in consortia? No, the fact that the Department is phasing out the consortia model suggests that the severity of the problem was inherent in a model of teacher education that was found to be unsatisfactory.

A corollary to the research questions is why did the situation arise? It arose because the Department did not pay attention to the Library's advice that access to library-resources was an important issue needing to be resolved. The solution for the future, as ever, lies in active, constructive, evidence-based involvement by the Library in course development and management. The project has provided evidence for arguing this case."

In running this project Alan found that he was dependent on the clerical assistant providing support to a degree higher than she was really being paid for. He found it hard to allocate time to the project. It was also difficult to remain emotionally and professionally neutral when students criticised the Library.