BCS-KIDMM **MetaKnowledge Mash-up** 17 September 2007

ultra**v**ersity

I&DeA
improvement and development agency

and do a mashup!

core UK

Richard Millwood,

Director Core Education UK

Reader, Institute for Educational Cybernetics, University of Bolton, formerly directing Ultralab at Anglia Ruskin University

Ultraversity - BA (Hons) Learning Technology Research

- Focus on **action to improve 'work'** context

- **'Learn while you earn'** - 3 years, part time but full time credit weighting

- Not located in any subject discipline, but in a methodological discipline of **action research**

- **100% online**, no face-to-face

- Validated twice,
  and **QA by Anglia Ruskin University**

Individual fulfilment

A Teaching Assistant in Essex has just gained an honours degree after studying entirely over the Internet.

Students report their motivation to study in terms of fulfilling their own life agenda.

'Work' in its broadest definition

Using life's challenges to learn

WOMEN

EVE Thirkle was just three months into a degree course when her son was diagnosed as autistic.

But Eve didn't panic and abandon the course.

Instead she used her studies to find out more about ten-year-old Jonathan's condition and how she could help him.

"The degree, a BA (Hons) in Learning, Technology and Research, is based around your work," said Eve, 47.

"When I started the course, I was working as a teaching assistant at Kingfisher Primary School.

"But when Jonathan was diagnosed, I gave up my job to look after him and was able to base my coursework around him."

Jonathan, a pupil at Canon Popham Primary School, has high-functioning autism. He is excellent at maths but strug-gles with some everyday situa-tions.

"When I'm cross with him, he just doesn't pick up on it at all," explained Eve. "I have to tell him I'm cross and how cross I am on a scale of one to ten because he is very mathemati-cal."

The degree course allowed her to carry out a year-long study looking at how she and husband, David, 45, an accountant at DMBC, could improve their parenting skills and change the home environ-ment to best help Jonathan.

"It gave me a focus at a time when it was very easy to get depressed," said Eve, who recently became chairman of Doncaster Autistic Society. "It was something for me to do that made me step outside the day-to-day situation and made me feel I was doing something about it."

The qualification, offered by Anglia Ruskin University, is available for study online which was ideal for Eve in her changed circumstances.

Although the former radiogra-pher does admit it was a steep learning curve getting to grips with the IT skills.

She said: "I started out with only slightly more than basic computer knowledge but, by the end of the course, I could produce video, web pages and sound clips."

Another bonus of the course was the virtual friends she made along the way.

"I have made some good friends online and I am looking forward to meeting them at the graduation ceremony."

Eve Thirkle, 47, of Langfield Drive, Edenthorpe, celebrates after achieving a first class degree in Learning Technology and Research. She used her work with her autistic son Jonathan, ten, as a basis for her research (D7833LR)

'Work' is defined broadly and includes voluntary and domestic activity. The activity needs to be capable of improvement and research.

Eve Thirkle started the degree as a Teaching Assistant, but her son was diagnosed with autism three months after starting. Eve switched to studying his development needs and her role in as a parent raising him.

Eve graduated with a First Class honours degree in July 2006.

From her local newspaper, Doncaster Today:

"It gave me a focus at a time when it was very easy to get depressed," said Eve, who recently became chair of the Doncaster Autistic Society.

Combining innovations

Inquiry-based learning

Action research methodology,
critical reflection,
learning at and through work,
workplace advocate

Personalised learning

Negotiation of study focus
through individual learning plan,
inquiry proposal

Online community of inquiry

Expert witnesses,
challenge and debate,
support, sharing findings,
critical feedback,
access to online library

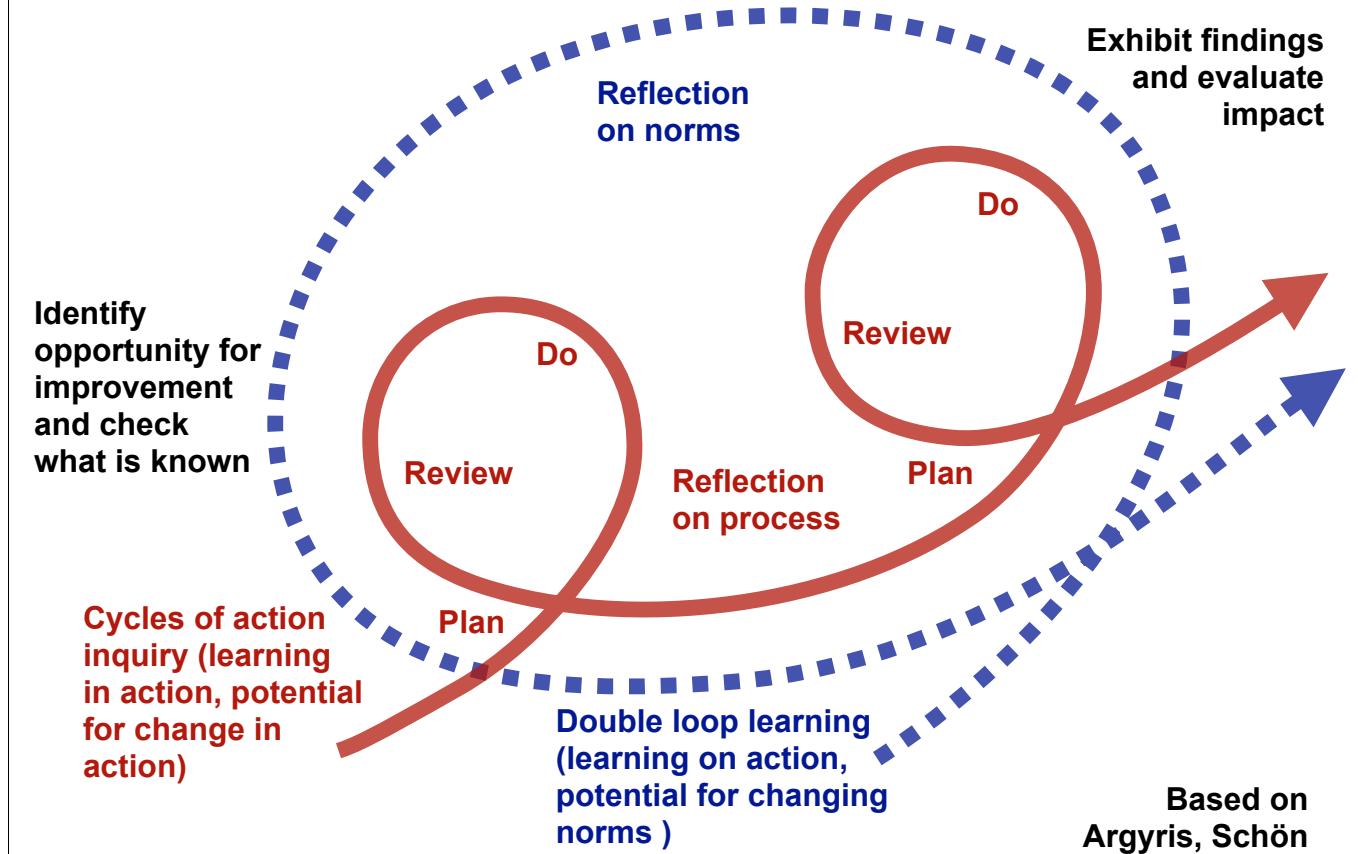### Graduate Skills - a confident, lifelong eLearner

Exhibition for dissertation

Shared inquiry findings to
stakeholders,
evaluated for impact

Assessment for learning

No exams, patchwork
presentation,
e-portfolio, peer review

The course has combined several innovations to create an approach which focusses on the development of a graduate with confidence, sustainable learning skills & habits and competent to use technology independently.

The regionally distributed team who developed this model, maintained a successful online community of practice themselves as they grew in confidence and know-how to offer the degree, and this is one of many departures from typical university practice.

Inquiry-based learning

Exhibit findings and evaluate impact

Reflection on norms

Identify opportunity for improvement and check what is known

Do

Review

Do

Review

Plan

Reflection on process

Plan

Cycles of action inquiry (learning in action, potential for change in action)

Double loop learning (learning on action, potential for changing norms)

Based on Argyris, Schön

An Action Research model is the basis for this version of Inquiry Based Learning.

Initially student researchers identify where improvement can be made in their workplace.

After checking what is known about the potential, they plan action, do it and review, reviewing their process as the cycle is repeated to improve.

Student researchers are guided to a double loop of reflection, looking outside the action's scope to the surrounding organisation and questiioning its norms as part of the context for action.

Technology

- **skills and knowledge** in online services

- developing **autonomy** and independence

- the need to be an **online practitioner** beyond qualification

- a private space as a launch pad for **public identity** as confidence increases

It has been an important focus to study the application of information and communications technologies - an essential skill for continuing engagement with the wider community and lifelong learning.

The degree depends on online community to function - students help each other and challenge each other as they learn together.

The strength of this community is hypothesised to achieve depth in learning, a phenomenon noted by Leonie Ramondt and Carole Chapman when analysing the nature of the Talking Heads community in 2005.

Community and expression

"Why is it I feel the community is a safe haven for my thoughts? Something has changed and its not just the increase in confidence where dealings with the community is concerned. I'm taking it for granted this year that I can express my thoughts, views, complaints, suggestions frankly with no qualms or fear of ridicule. What has happened? It is as if the floodgates of my thoughts have flung themselves open and I am allowed to bring forth all those ideas that have been hiding away in dusky corners of my mind."

- Amanda Smith, Cohort 3

I believe that learning arises in the context of students expressing their ideas and then evaluating these expressions.

It is vital to feel free to express tentative thoughts in order to perfect them - online community in the case of Ultraversity clearly empowers students in this way.

Community and expertise

"At first I was very sceptical about the use of community for learning. I did not trust the concept of learning from other 'ordinary' people. I wanted my Learning Facilitator to validate all information for me. Soon I realised that these [students] were 'extraordinary' people, with a wealth of knowledge and especially experience among them. They were people who were conquering their struggle to juggle home, family, work and study and far from doubting their contribution to my learning I began to be in awe of their expertise."

Student researchers do not instinctively trust each other as sources of authority - schooling has suggested otherwise.

Sustained community, focussed on developing trust and agreeing shared purposes, helps them to appreciate each other's strengths.

Community and affect

"I do feel that individuals emotions have not been taken into consideration. e.g. I didn't expect on-line learning to be so 'addictive'. I was never comfortable with using chat rooms before, but First Class is an excellent meeting place for advice, support or just a chat. I also didn't feel that the [Guardian] article put across the very deep bond our cohort has forged. I look upon my fellow researchers and LF's, not just as peers but good friends - not bad for being complete strangers 18 months ago. I can't remember life before Ultraversity and I am wondering what life is going to be like when we all graduate."

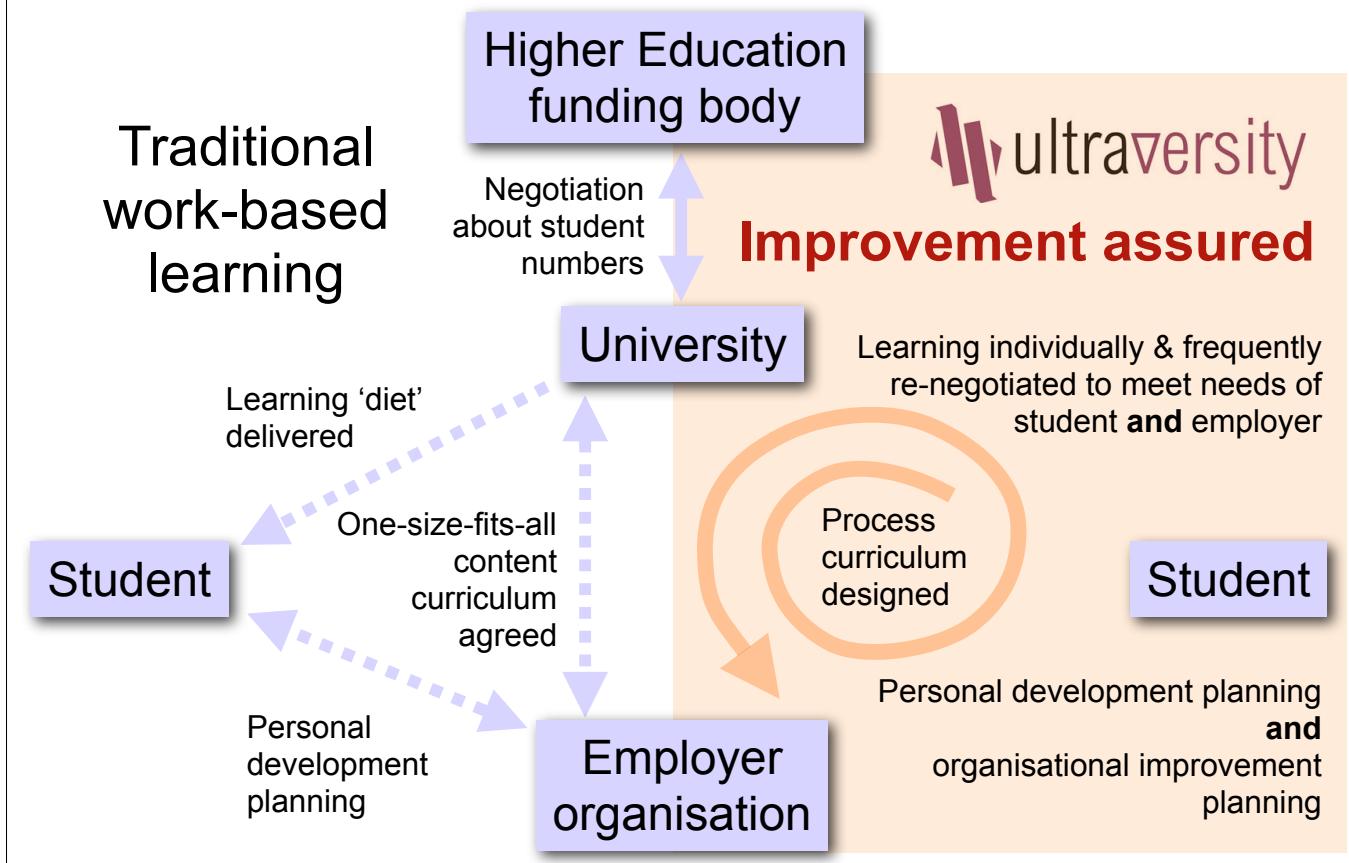- Lynn, Cohort 3

This remark was made in response to a newspaper article titled 'The University Where Everyone is a Stranger". (Stephen Hoare, Tuesday June 20, 2006 The Guardian).

Student researchers were quick to point out how strong the bonds were between them and how much they had been rewarded by the friendships which had developed online.
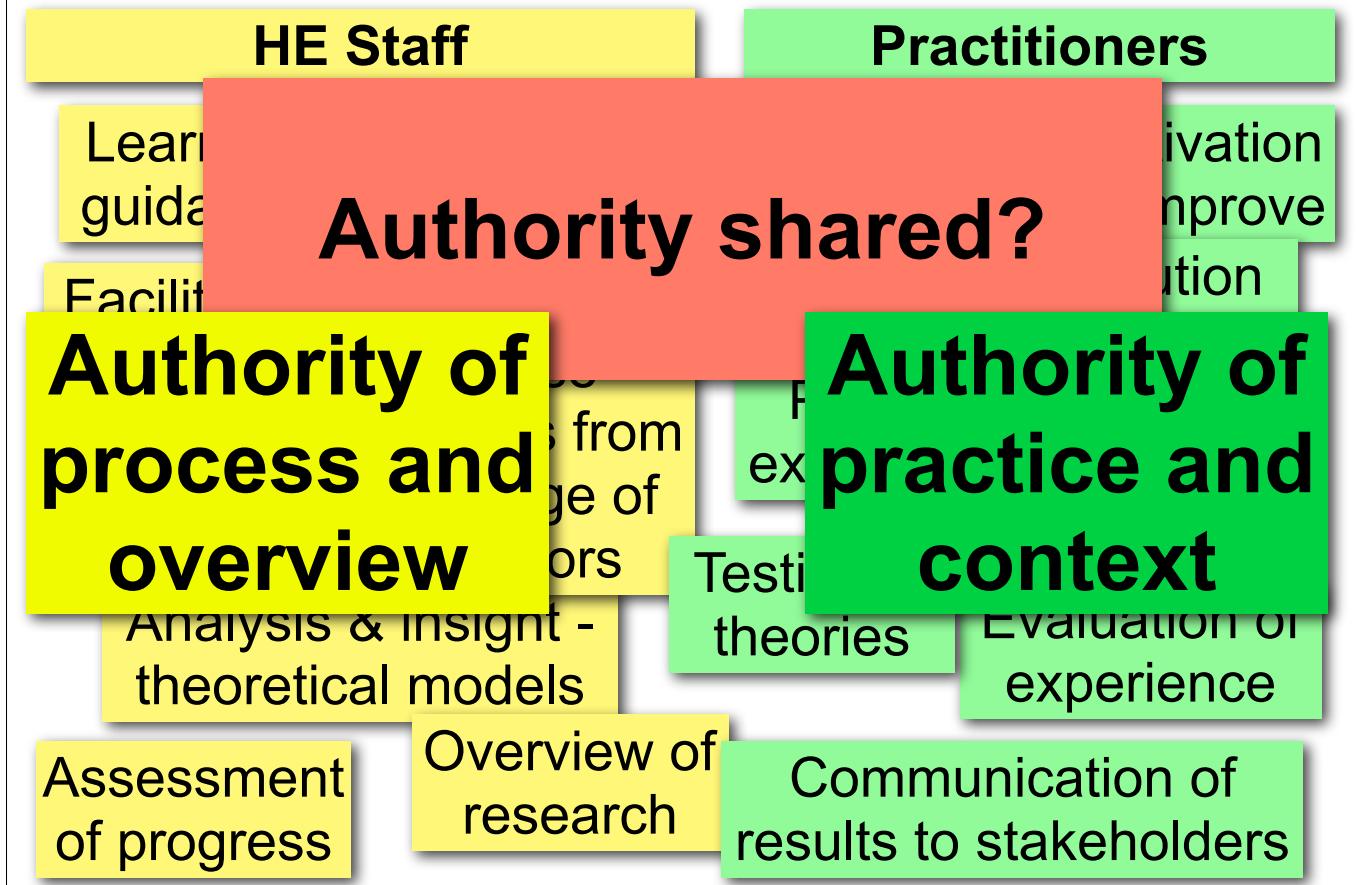
Organisational improvement

Traditional work-based learning

Higher Education funding body

ultraversity

Improvement assured

Negotiation about student numbers

University

Learning individually & frequently re-negotiated to meet needs of student **and** employer

Learning 'diet' delivered

One-size-fits-all content curriculum agreed

Process curriculum designed

Student

Student

Personal development planning

Employer organisation

Personal development planning **and** organisational improvement planning

A caricature of the development of Foundation Degrees would suggest that it is a 'stitch-up' between employer and university, which is slow to develop and is then applied to the 'patient' after a protracted development. The curriculum suffers from being difficult to up-date and inflexible if oriented towards content in fast-moving professional contexts.

Ultraversity has developed a process curriculum, which does not define any detailed content, focussing instead on the disciplines of action enquiry, digital creativity and exhibition.

It is contended that these disciplines, when linked to the twin drivers of personal fulfilment and organisational improvement set up the learner for lifelong learning and the organisation for considerable assurance of improvement.

Authority

HE Staff **Practitioners**

Lear... guida...

Facilit...

Authority shared?

Authority of process and overview

Authority of practice and context

...ivation ...nprove ...ution

...s from ...ge of ...ors

p... ex...

Analysis & insight - theoretical models

Testi... theories

Evaluation of experience

Assessment of progress

Overview of research

Communication of results to stakeholders

It is important to identify the rôle of the Higher Education Institution when the focus is on the student researcher and on their workplace.

In my view, although there are authoritative strengths in both university and workplace, this is a case of sharing authority, blurring the boundaries and extending the university into the workplace.

Eve Thirkle & Sharon Sweeney
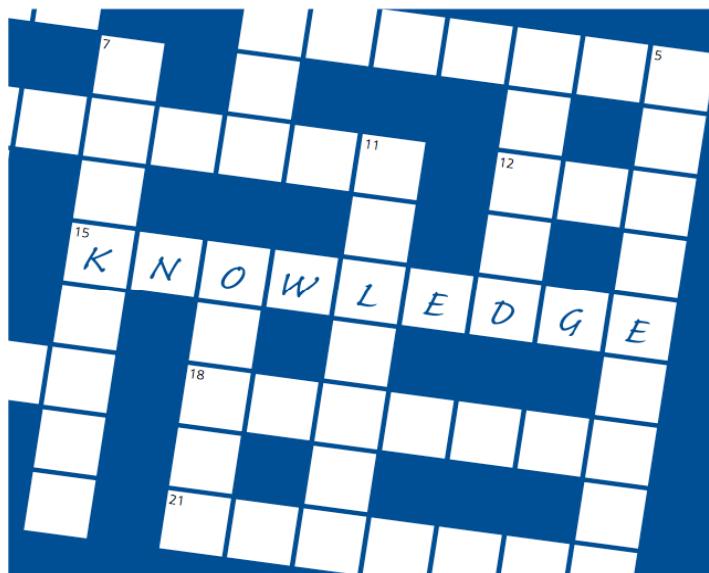
[Search]

For the IDeA Knowledge website

Just Google 'idea'

I&DeA Knowledge

Search [   ] [GO]   Quick find [Select section or initiative ▼] [GO]

IDeA: working for local government improvement

IDeA Knowledge works for local government improvement by providing news and examples of good practice from councils across England and Wales, together with access to the IDeA's range of tools and services.

Regenerating Castleford: interview with Peter Box

The Castleford Project is delivering £11 million of improvements to this West Yorkshire former mining town. We caught up with Peter Box, Leader of Wakefield Council to find out how.

Helping lead members improve children's services

Leo Thomson, former leader of the London Borough of Ealing, shares her experience of meeting the challenges in children's social care.

Local Government White Paper: impact on councillors

The white paper proposes many benefits for frontline councillors but there are major obligations to engage local citizens. Read Councillor Graham Chapman's thoughts and have your say.

NICE obesity guidance

The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) recently published guidance on how to deal with obesity. We examine the potential impact on communities, councils and the NHS.

Email: ihelp@idea.gov.uk
Switchboard: 020 7296 6600
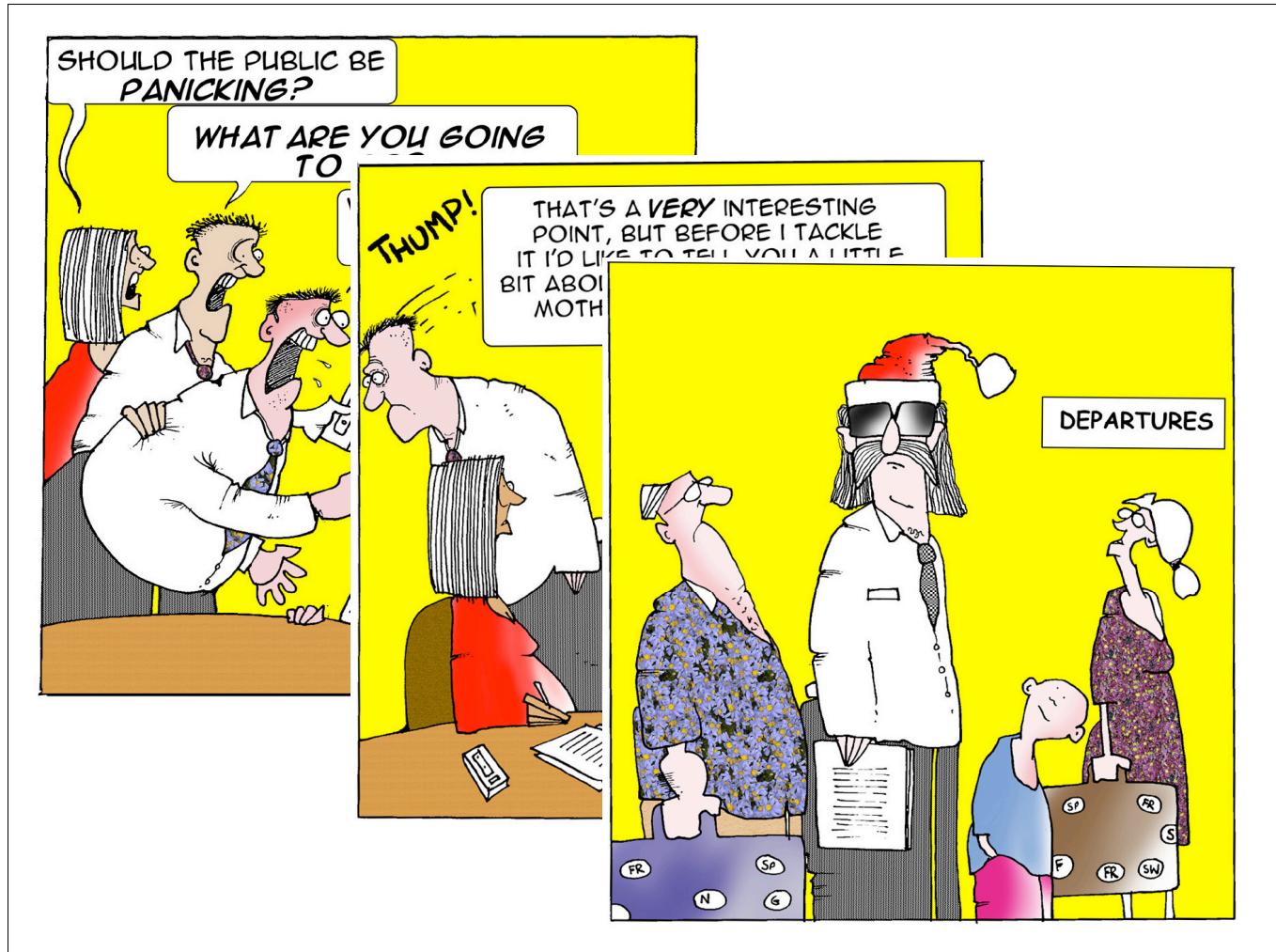Information: 020 7296 6880

Sign up
- Email bulletin
- RSS news feeds
- Communities of Practice

See also
- Regional improvement
- Adding up to strong families: interview with Penny Mansfield
- Political skills for councillors
- Healthy communities calendar for February
- Social care in England

IDeA news and events
- Policy and performance Community of Practice
- IDeA recognised as an 'investor in people'
- Beacon awards ceremony and gala dinner

Or you could search IDeA Knowledge and present an *informed* response within minutes.

IDeA Knowledge provides…

- A one-stop-shop
- Rapid access to background knowledge
- National, regional and local perspectives
- Communication with experts in other authorities
- Authoritative and reliable information
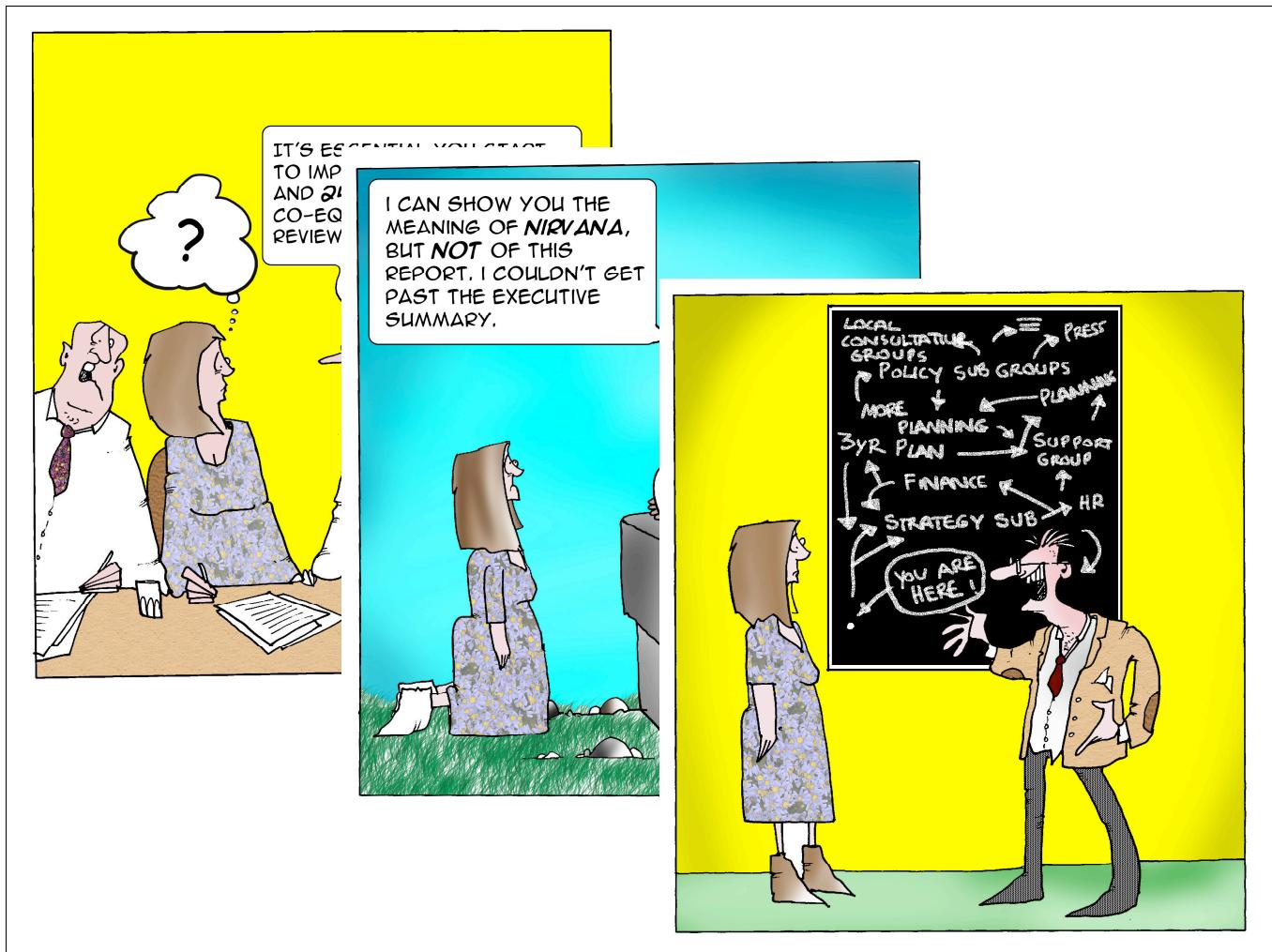
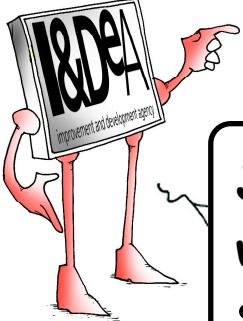# IDeA Knowledge can help you with strategic planning

- One search will get information from **IDeA and related sites, such as the Improvement Network:** **www.improvementnetwork.gov.uk**

- Key players collaborate to produce the **IDeA resources**

- There are **IDeA toolkits** for a range of actions required

- There are **IDeA documents** to support learning and staff development
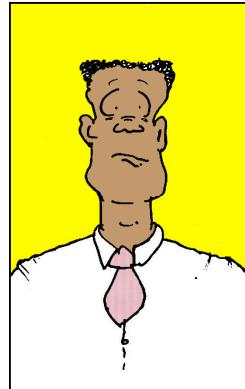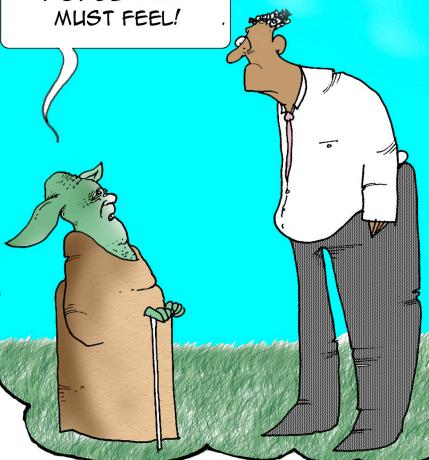
Communities of practice for local government

Home   Communities   My Profile   People Finder   Logout

Welcome to Communities of Practice
Connecting people who learn and share - a service for local government funded by local government.

To start a Community, please contact us at communities@idea.gov.uk.
We will provide assistance with the steps involved in setting up a Community of Practice.

Joining an **IDeA Community of Practice** will help you to:
- quickly obtain practical solutions to issues
- access cutting-edge practices and thinking
- network with other people, sharing knowledge and experience

Forums - discuss and exchange ideas.
Wiki - add and edit content collectively.
Document Library - store, share and track documents.
Event Calendar - find out what's going on.

How do I join a Community?
How do I register as a member?
What are the benefits?
Are there any rules?
View all frequently asked questions

IDeA Knowledge connects you with others

- •Case studies of good practice
- •A connection to Beacon Authorities
- •Discussion forums
- •Communities of Practice

In summary, **IDeA Knowledge** is:

- A means of improving local government
- A bank of relevant and up-to-date knowledge
- An authoritative source
- A communication tool

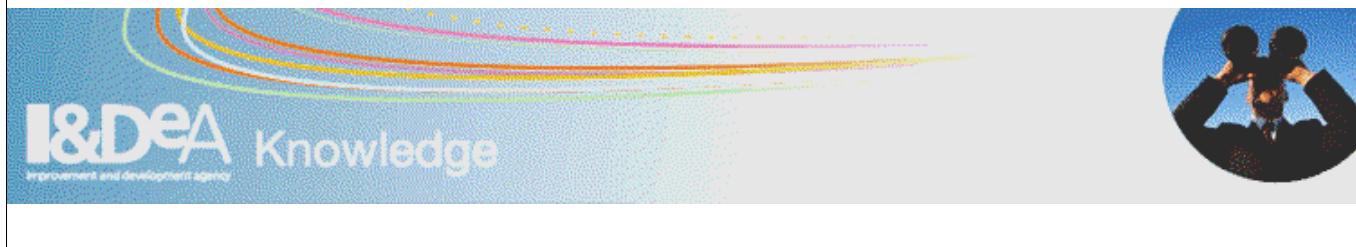**What can** del.icio.us *your bookmarks* **Frappr!** Beta **twitter** **flickr** **tell us?**

facebook

How can these help improve

Communities of practice for local government **?**

Richard Millwood, Core Education
Monday 3rd September 2007

I&DeA Knowledge
improvement and development agency

Council bans social network site

Workers at Kent County Council (KCC) have been banned from using the social networking website Facebook.

The authority said it had restricted access to the site under its electronic-use policy, and was one of several organisations to take the step.

Some workers said they objected to the move to stop them wasting time, and wanted it back on the KCC network.

"Like any other organisation, we have a responsibility to keep our IT systems secure," the council said.

The authority employs 32,000 people.

BBC NEWS

… continued…

One Facebook user, John Woodley, said: "You have your network of friends and there is always that element of trying to develop other relationships and meet other people on there.

"We are social animals - it can be difficult to know when to stop."

Professor Frank Furedi, from the University of Kent, said the site could be "a very valuable asset for creating communities between employees".

He said: "It's a way that employees can share experiences, and it's a way that employers can learn about problems that exist in the workplace."

But employment lawyer Jonathan Gauton said: "Employers are facing employees who are wasting a lot of time, who are ill-focused on their correct responsibilities.

"Ultimately, they can be sanctioned. They can be disciplined for it, and we have seen employees ultimately dismissed."

28/08/2007

At least 32,000 council employees were blocked from the Facebook website at work yesterday.

The axe fell after Kent County Council found staff were spending too much time messaging friends from their desks.

A source said: "The hours we were losing to people using Facebook were getting ludicrous."

Now even the 84 elected councillors cannot use the authority's network to access the site, also banned by the Met police and Transport for London.

One frustrated worker commented: "KCC have blocked fb. You b******s."

flickr

del.icio.us
your bookmarks

Frappr! Beta

twitter

Sharing individual knowledge around:
- photographs
- bookmarks
- location
- activity

facebook has automated **gossip**, which adds significant **presence**
- It has strong tools for communicating **personal identity** and **interpersonal relations**
- It has great integration with email providing effective **notification**
- There is a strong sense of **dynamic**

Thoughts

- customer relationship management to company relationship management (by the customer)

- personal to interpersonal to communal

- most people influence most people in some way (sorry Dan)

- nearby people are usually more similar to those far apart, but the internet has murdered distance (sorry again Dan)

- diversity, neoligisms and dissent are all an inevitable result of human creativity

- the real world is a figment of imagination
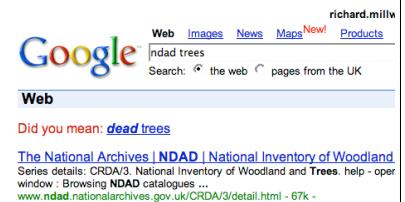
www.idea.gov.uk

www.ultraversity.net

www.core-ed.org.uk

www.bolton.ac.uk/iec