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Distance Teaching in Developing Commits - 1990

EVALUATION OF PRODUCTION WORKSHOP - REPORT

This report is based on an analysis of questionnaires returned by 26 of the 28 students on the course.

1. GENERAL

1.1 Asked what their present or future jobs were mainly concerned with, 'writing' was mentioned by 18 respondents, 'editing' by nine, and 'radio/audio' by ten. Other jobs mentioned were: administration, coordination, planning, research, training, teaching, publishing and information.

1.2 Asked about the usefulness of the workshop as a whole - particularly in terms of present or future jobs - 20 students had found the workshop 'very useful', five found it 'fairly useful', and one 'satisfactory'. No one had found the workshop 'not useful'.

2. COURSE PLANNING

2.1 Nearly half the respondents felt the treatment of course planning was 'very good'; an equal number felt it was 'fairly good'. One student saw it as 'satisfactory' and another thought it was 'not very good'.

2.2 Most People (21), felt the amount of time spent on course planning was about right - though one student felt it was 'too long' (compared, for instance, to audio and video), while three felt it was 'too short', and one said it was 'much too short'.

2.3 Asked about the treatment of the different themes, most students felt that the treatment of all four main themes had been either 'very good' or 'fairly good'. However, the sessions on 'Curriculum design:- aims and methods' seem to have been a little less successful than the others: four people regarded them only as 'satisfactory', and three felt the treatment had been 'not very good'.

2.4 Eleven people felt they would have liked more time on 'Curriculum design'; eight would have liked more time on 'Introduction to the media'; and six wanted more on 'Making a course outline'.

2.5 In response to the open-ended question which invited further comments on the course planning sessions, in addition to a number of positive comments on how useful the sessions had been:

- One student felt that the sessions on 'Student needs and characteristics' and 'Curriculum design' had been a bit 'confused' in their presentation;
- Two others felt that more work needed to be done on 'Curriculum design' - e.g. a practical curriculum design exercise;

- One person felt that the sessions generally had been biased towards more 'academic' comes, with not enough emphasis on non-formal distance education;
- Two gatlml felt the treatment in general was 'too deme'; and several cominetited that there was not enough time to absorb the material;
- Two students also found some of the group work 'bodng' and 'monotonous'.

3. WRITING

3.1 Eight members of the group felt that the treatment of writing and editing pcinted materials was 'very good'; ten thought it was 'fairly good'; four regarded it as 'satisfactory'; while two felt it was 'not very good'.

3.2 Neady two-thirds of the group felt that the amount of time spent on writing was 'about right'. However, six students felt that it was 'too short', while one felt it was 'too long', again compared to the treatment of audio and video.

3.3 Commenting on the treatment of different themes, most students felt that the treatment of most of the themes was either 'very good' or 'fainly good'. However, significant minorities (of about a third of the respondents) only regarded as 'satisfactory' the treatment of 'Preparing mments't ' reading levels/ediljng language', 'Testing materials', Format' and The management of production, printing and maintenance'; and in each case, two or three people felt the treatment was either 'not very good' or 'not at all good'. In the case of 'Copy editing', about a quarter of the respondents thought the treatment 'not very good'.

3.4 For most of the themes in this part of the workshop, between three and seven students felt that they would have liked more time.

3.5 Again, when asked for any other comments on the writing secsions, several students mentioned that they. would have liked more time. Individual students also made the following speafic points:

- There was a tendency to assume 'that the manuals would give us more skills than the tutor' - implying, I think, an over-reliance on the manuals;
- There should have been more on copy editing; and it would have been useful to introduce students to proof-reading signs;
- It would have also been useful to offer students basic information on print mdmobgy-wimaviittoapdnthome;
- A lxoader treatment of contamination skills would have been helpful.

4. AU 010

4.1 About three-quarters of the students felt that the treatment of radio and audio cassettes was 'very good'; six felt it was 'fairly good'; and one regarded it as 'satisfactory'.

4.2 Most students (17) felt that the time allowed for radio and audio cassettes was 'about right'. But seven felt that it was 'too short'; and one felt that it was 'much too short'.

4.3 On the treatment of the different themes, again about three-quarters felt that the treatment of 'The potential of audio' and 'Planning for audio' was 'very good' - with most of the rest regarding it as 'fairly good'. The response on Interviewing and location recording, Writing for audio' and 'Presentation and production', was a little less positive. Nearly half thought that the treatment of these themes was 'very good': but slightly more than half saw them as only 'fairly good' or 'satisfactory' - and, in each case, one or two students felt they were either 'not very good', or in one case 'not at all good'.

4.4 For each of the themes, between three and seven students felt that they would have liked more time.

4.5 Most responses to the open-ended question were positive. But six students indicated that they would have liked more time for this part of the workshop. Several felt that it was a bit rushed; one felt that there was too much pressure; another suggested that there should be about ten days of teaching on audio. Specifically, individual students suggested that they would have liked:

- More on script writing, presentation and production;
- More 'on' experience with recording equipment;
- More on the use of audio material in distance teaching;
- Extracts from good radio and audio cassette programmes for guided analysis;
- Tape editing should have been introduced.

See also the note on audio handouts/suggested manual below.

5. TV AND VIDEO

5.1 Five students felt that the treatment of TV and Video was 'very good'; ten felt it was 'fairly good'; nine saw it as 'satisfactory'; and one said it was 'not very good'.

5.2 All those who responded (23) would have liked more time for TV and Video.

5.3 Asked for any other comments on the TV and Video sessions, a substantial number of students indicated that they felt the subject needed more time.

Among the Specific comments made were the following:

- The sessions needed more on principles and theory;
- More time needed for preparing the programme;
- More emphasis needed on script writing and production techniques;
- More on handling the equipment, and on radio and TV studio management;
- Because time was short, sessions tended to be superficial - needed more on integration with print and face-to-face teaching;
- lecture notes/handouts would have been useful.

6. PRACTICAL PROJECTS (MATERIALS PRODUCTION)

6.1 Students were asked what useful skills they felt they had learned from the project work. A wide range of skills were mentioned. The two that appeared most frequently were:

- Writing and editing materials (print and audio) for distance education;
- Working in a group.

Also mentioned were the following:

- Choosing the best media for distance education;

Planning and designing materials in print and audio;
Presentation and production of audio materials;
Cassette recording process and handling video camera;
Awareness of the complexity of the materials production process; and of
the importance of financial and material constraints;
Management skills - including management of groups;
- Working under pressure.

6.2 Students were also asked to suggest ways in which the actual 'tasks' might be improved. About a third of those who made suggestions were for practical project work. Among the other specific suggestions put forward were the following:

- More rigorous introductions to practical projects;
 - More information on audio production; more hints on choosing topics for TV and Video programmes;
 - Exercises in script writing;
 - Make audio equipment available to the groups, so that they could get more hands-on experience;
 - Undertaking two practical projects in each area, instead of one - so that students could learn from the first attempt, and improve on the second;
 - Emphasis should be on how projects should be written to meet international requirements; joint projects should be discouraged;
- Several specific comments were made on the principle of working in groups:
- It was suggested that two need to establish criteria for the composition of groups (Perhaps implying that groups should be more 'balanced'? If so, how?)
 - It was also suggested that group work doesn't seem to work in some cases; and that there should either be fewer groups, or better monitoring/more intervention from tutors.

6.3 Asked for any other comments on the project work, most responses were positive - 'Most memorable part of the course. Useful 'hands-on' experience. Insight into group work', 'Projects good - kept me on my toes all the time', 'Enjoyable - wanted to learn more - suggesting that students felt they had derived benefit from the project work. However, several students again mentioned the need for more time. The following specific comments were also made:

- Projects should not be 'fake' - especially on audio, TV and video - they should be related to the 'real' world;
- There should be more time to go into the field to collect information;
- Again, there should be an opportunity to do two projects in each area - so that students could learn from the first and improve their performance on the second;
- There should be more tutor intervention (support, guidance, supervision?) in group work.

7. MANUALS AND HANDOUTS

7.1 We asked for Distance Education (RED)

(a) Four students had read 'all' of this manual, - ten had read 'most'; 12 had read 'some'.

(b) About two-thirds found it 'very useful'; the other third found it 'fairly useful'.
(c) Students were equally divided on the question of whether there was enough time to spend studying the manual: one half said there was, the other half said there wasn't.

7.2 Course Development (BLUE)

(a) Again, of the students who responded, four said they had read 'all' of the manual; 11 had read 'most'; and nine had read 'some' - roughly the same distribution as for the McG manual.

(b) Three-fifths found it 'very useful'; the other two-fifths, 'fairly useful'.

(c) And again students were equally divided between whether there was 'enough time' or 'not enough time' to study the material.

7.3 Audio Handouts

(a) Asked how much they had read, a rather higher proportion (about half) had read 'all' of the audio handouts, compared to the W ' ' g and Course Development manuals - probably because there was less material to read: the remainder, eight had read 'most' and three had read 'some'.

(b) Nineteen of the respondents found the handouts 'very useful'; four found them 'fairly useful'; and one, 'not very useful'.

(c) Again, probably because of the length, four-fifths of the respondents (16) felt they had enough time to study the material; the other fifth said there was 'not enough time'.

7.4 In response to the Open-ended question asking for further comments on the manuals and handouts, most students reacted positively. In general, they seemed to find the manuals and handouts interesting, well-prepared, clear, easy to read and useful, both for the sessions and as reference material later. A number of more specific points were also made:

- About a third of those who responded suggested that there ought to be a more comprehensive 'Audio Manual' - along the lines of the other two;

Individuals also suggested that:

- While the manuals were generally useful, the W ' ' manual needs improvement; and tutors should not assume that the manuals contain everything, and that all they have to do is merely to refer to them;

- Sometimes, readings from the manuals were set, but relatively little reference was made to them during the sessions;

- It would help if there were more glossaries of difficult words.

8. ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE WORKSHOP

8.1 Students were asked to indicate how much they already knew about each of the five areas covered by the workshop objectives before they started the workshop. For each of the areas, about three-fifths of the students felt they 'knew a little' while the other two-fifths were roughly equally divided between knowing 'a lot' and knowing 'nothing'. The main exceptions to this were that a

higher proportion (8:3) felt they knew a lot about the difficulties of learning at a distance; and a lower proportion (3:8) felt they knew a lot about the characteristics of good distance teaching materials.

8.2 Asked how much they felt they'd learned in each of the areas during the workshop, in each case three-quarters or more of the students felt they had 'learned a lot'; and the remainder (about a quarter or less) - with one exception, in one area - felt they had 'learned a little'. In general, therefore, the learning objectives of the workshop seem to have been achieved.

1:8.3 This question seemed mysteriously to disappear in the typing - sorry!

8.4 Students were asked to comment on the amount of time spent on different kinds of activity in the workshop.

- More than three-quarters of the respondents felt that the amount of time spent on lectures and discussion was 'about right'; the remainder were divided between 'too much' and 'too little'.

- About three-fifths felt that the amount of work was 'about right'; the remainder were roughly equally divided between saying there was 'too much' and 'too little'.

- A majority (about three-fifths) felt there was 'too little' individual work; most of the rest thought the amount was 'about right'.

- Just over half the respondents (14) felt that the amount of practical work was 'about right'; but a substantial minority (11) thought there was too little.

This would seem to suggest that the proportion of time spent on lectures and discussion is probably about right; but we probably need to increase the amount of time on individual work, and there may be a case for increasing the amount of time on group work.

8.5 The final open-ended question asked for general comments about the Production workshop as a whole. Most students were positive in their responses: well planned and structured - good balance between theory and practice, 'good and involving', 'good experience of cooperative work in groups', 'relevant', etc. However, nearly half of those who responded to this question (seven out of 15) - less than a quarter of those on the course - felt that the workshop needed more time. One student felt that it was too 'rushed'; another wanted more time - especially for video; while another wanted more time for production in the studio. There were relatively few specific suggestions for change in response to this question: most of these had been given earlier in the open-ended question on the main sections of the workshop. However, one student did suggest that, while in general the programme was useful, in future years it would be helpful to include teaching and practical work on the use of computers, offset and/or silk screen printing, and desktop publishing.

Note: Original questionnaires, summary sheets and notes on open-ended questions, are available from John Thomas on request.

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