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# Responding to contestation in teaching and learning projects in the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in the United Kingdom

Gosling, D

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## **Responding to contestation in teaching and learning projects - the experience of the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in the UK**

### ***Introduction***

Teaching and learning 'programs' or 'projects' continue to be a favoured tool of policymakers trying to achieve culture change in higher education. The Australian Learning and Teaching Council allocated in 2012, \$8 million to development projects (ALTC 2012), while in New Zealand Ako Aotearoa has committed well over \$2.5 million to support projects (Ako Aotearoa 2012). In the UK, (prior to 2005) the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) supported short-term projects (Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning) to the tune of £30m (Fielden et al. 2005).

The initiative to launch Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs), was announced in 2004 at a cost of £340m. The central idea was 'to reward excellent teaching practice and to invest in that practice further in order to increase and deepen its impact across a wider teaching and learning community' (HEFCE 2004,1). English higher education institutions were invited to identify what they considered to be 'excellent practice', resulting in the establishment, in 2005, of 74 centres which were awarded recurrent funding of up to £500,000 per annum for five years, and a capital sum up to £2 million.

Despite claims that policy objectives can be 'delivered' (HEFCE 1999) through the funding of projects, there have been doubts about the efficacy of this approach (HEFCE 1998; Fielden et al. 2005; Haywood et al. 2001). If the opportunities offered by centrally-funded initiatives are not to be 'squandered', as has been claimed they often are (Abbas and McLean 2003, 69), it is important that there should be a better understanding of the contested nature of time-limited projects.

In this paper we consider the experience of contestation in the context of the CETLs in order to investigate ways in which externally funded teaching and learning projects are received by the host institution and the extent to which it is possible to overcome the tensions and paradoxes that arise.

The paper gives an account of the struggles CETL teams experienced and how they attempted to overcome areas of conflict and uncertainty to achieve what they believed were worthwhile

goals for improving teaching and learning within their institutions. We contend that the experience of the CETLs has a wider relevance for understanding what happens when funded initiatives encounter the micro-politics of institutions. We conclude by drawing some inferences for both funders and institutions that have significance for the design of all projects intended to develop teaching and learning.

### ***Contestation in change management in HE***

There is a view that any change management will be contested, because achieving change within institutions inevitably involves resolving contradictions, tensions and conflicts. The notion of conflictual change is central to a 'dialectical process theory' of innovation according to which it is confrontation between opposing entities that generates change through actions taken to respond to the contradictions, conflicts or tensions that co-exist within an organisational context. (Poole and Van de Ven 2004, 379),

Other theories of change also recognise that conflict is likely to occur and will need to be resolved. In activity theory, for example, contrasting conceptions of activity will coexist within an activity system and tensions between elements within an activity system can be expected (Engestrom 1999). In life cycle accounts of change, it has been suggested that 'early growth through creativity results in crisis' (Poole and Van de Ven 2004, 377) and Tuckman's stage theory suggested that 'forming' is followed by 'storming' involving resistance, fluctuations in attitude, defensiveness and disunity (Tuckman 1965). In communities of practice 'identification' and 'negotiability' are key dynamics and generative processes which presuppose differences in status, identity, meaning, which have to be negotiated particularly in new social configurations (Wenger 1998, 188 - 209). Both Engestrom and Wenger emphasise that conflict is not necessarily damaging. 'Incoherence, inconsistency, conflict and dilemma are integral features of activity systems. They offer major opportunities for personal and collective learning' (Blackler 1993, 875). Indeed the idea of 'constructive' or 'creative' tensions' has become a popular theme in the literature of change management (Rowley 1996; Senge 1990).

The literature on change in HE strongly supports the suggestion that contestation will be experienced by projects attempting to achieve change. Rowland suggests that 'Higher education is a site of conflicting pressures' in which 'contestation' plays an essential role in its functioning (2006, 27). Universities display to a high degree 'fields of power where fights for distinction and domination often allow (and even foster) contradictory views of the organization's future co-

existing in a single entity' (Clegg. et al. 2002). Because the conflicting pressures that Rowland refers to are contradictory, universities take on a 'paradoxical character' which cannot be resolved but must be accommodated by any change process (Meister-Scheytt & Scheytt 2005). Achieving change therefore involves the accommodation of contradictions, tensions and conflicts (see also Henkel 2000, Barnett, 2000, Becher and Trowler 2001; Fanghanel 2007; Filippakou and Tapper 2008;).

Therefore as change agents, the CETLs could expect to encounter conflict, but the contested nature of the notion of 'teaching excellence' was a consideration specific to this initiative. Claims to excellence in teaching are particularly prone to be contentious, partly because of their 'close relationship with neo-liberal ideological assumptions about teaching performativity' (Skelton 2005) and partly because in Inglis's view (2012) the word 'excellence' is 'now so filthy with dishonest use as to have turned into intellectual sewage'. Judgements of excellence necessarily involve contested values and academic conflict can be particularly fierce when values collide (Barnett 2000).

### ***The Context of the Research Project***

Funding for the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) initiative was announced by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) following a government statement that it wished to 'celebrate and reward teaching excellence' in higher education (White Paper, 2003). Institutions were invited to make a case for teaching excellence within 'existing programmes for student learning or broad areas of study' (HEFCE, 2004:6) in order to qualify for the funding. HEFCE explicitly said that 'we do not attempt to define excellence' but it did expect that there would be 'the potential for extending the impact of excellence into other programmes or areas of student learning' (HEFCE 2004:13). Assessment of CETL bids took place in two stages between April and November 2003. 259 proposals were received at stage one, of which 106 were invited by the assessment panel to submit proposals and business plans at stage two. From the second stage, 74 CETLs were recommended for funding (HEFCE 2005).

A novel feature of the CETL initiative was the absence of strong accountability requirements by the sponsoring organisation. HEFCE only required an interim report that was not commented on and a final report when the CETL closed. Because CETLs were judged to be based on excellent practice they were encouraged to take risks in developing further 'good practice'. And they were given five years of funding, which it was believed would be sufficient time to allow

experimentation to occur, relationships to be built and influence exerted both within the host institution(s) and across the whole sector.

Following the launch of HEFCE's *Invitation to Bid* (2004), Gosling and Hannan (2007a; 2007b) implemented a longitudinal study which sought to investigate the experiences of bid-writers, educational developers and university managers to the CETL initiative. This research found that bid-writers were substantially influenced by tactical considerations about what they thought funders would accept (Gosling and Hannan 2007b). Furthermore, selection was partly based on the development plans submitted and not simply on a judgement about teaching 'excellence'. There was evidence that this biased the selection towards bids which were in line with developments favoured by the funding council such as computer-based learning and employability (Gosling and Hannan, 2007a).

Although the funding was awarded to institutions and projects were endorsed by the Vice-Chancellor, bids were typically developed and written by individuals or small groups. The extent to which these bid-writers consulted on the bid that was submitted varied considerably. We followed up the bid-writers who were successful in being awarded a CETL or their successors if they were replaced by new directors. Interviews were conducted at key stages of the CETL initiative i.e. formation (2006), mid-term (2008) and most recently (2010) at the end of the funding period.

The overall aim of the research was to examine the ways in which individual agents with a commitment to enhance teaching and learning have interacted with, and interpreted, a major initiative designed to support and reward teaching excellence. The narratives constructed by this research reflect the experience of these actors and excludes the perspective of many others who were affected by the CETLs and who might take a different view from those expressed by those principally involved in implementing these projects.

The research is based on 15 case studies (the characteristics of each are outlined in Table 1) using interviews conducted at each stage of this study. In total, 49 participants representing a mix of bid-writers, senior managers and CETL directors and staff were interviewed.

In the interviews we conducted, we did not ask for examples of contestation, nor was contestation a category in the coding used to analyse the transcripts, but it emerged as a theme in respondents' reports principally on 'challenges' and 'unforeseen developments', but evidence

also emerged from coding relating to 'emotional responses' and 'relationships with academic staff/home department/central units/university managers'. Respondents were given the opportunity to comment on a draft of this paper to ensure that the authors had not misrepresented them.

We recognise that in focusing on points of conflict we may appear to under-estimate the achievements and successes of the CETLs that became our case studies. This is not our intention. The evaluation of the CETLs (SQW 2011) has provided evidence of their impact and in another paper we have examined the success of CETLs relating reward and recognition of teaching and learning (Turner and Gosling, 2012).

Table 1: summary characteristics of respondents

All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and coded using categories which sought to identify themes (a) continuing from phase 1 (b) emerging in the final phase of the CETL (c) relating to the personal experience of leading an innovation (d) relating to theories of change. Codes were trialled and modified to reflect the principal concerns and interests of the respondents.

Each CETL was identified by an alpha-numeric identifier (e.g. C3) and coded by institution type (N for post-1992, O for pre-1992) and respondents were further identified by their role (B for bid writer, D for director of the CETL, ED for Educational Developer, and M for manager). The date of the interview is indicated by a year if this other than 2010.

### ***Responses of senior management***

HEFCE recognised the importance of senior management support and required all bids to be 'signed-off' by the head of the institution indicating 'support to the bid and confirming its links with the institution's or partnership's strategies' (HEFCE 2004, para 80). But the evidence from our sample of CETLs suggests that support from senior managers could not be taken for granted and in some cases lack of support from the Vice-Chancellor or other senior managers became a critical area of contestation.

The fundamental problem for the CETLs was that HEFCE expected these newly created units to have an influence in developing teaching across their institutions. Ultimately they needed support from senior managers to bring about changes to practice across their institution. But in

eight of our case studies the directors perceived that their senior managers had a negative view of the work of the CETLs or were indifferent to it.

In most cases the origin of the CETL had not come from the senior managers. They had signed-off the bid not knowing whether the proposal would ever become a reality in their institution. Having to implement a project with ambitious goals for institutional change came as a shock, for example, in the case C3(N), where the Deans resisted the idea that the CETL had a mandate to promote change across the institution, not least because it challenged their own managerial control.

In another new university, C2N, the director felt that the CETL was 'ignored' because 'it wasn't their baby' and because of its autonomous funding and its semi-detached position in the organisational structure. The lack of co-ordination between the CETL and senior managers' priorities was played out slightly differently where the aims of the CETL were seen to overlap with an initiative being led by the Vice-Chancellor. The CETL found itself as 'on parallel tracks' and therefore 'lost an opportunity to lead something because that was something that had been very much driven from the Vice-Chancellors office' (C7ND)

In an 'ancient university' we discuss in more detail below, (C11O) senior academic staff had little sympathy with the goals of the CETL because it was not part of the traditional culture of the institution and the CETL was proposing forms of training that they had never experienced, or felt the need for, themselves. In another old university the director perceived a 'surprising lack of institutional support for what we were doing'. Senior managers were 'quite detached from what we're doing maybe even threatened by what we're doing, I don't know, but there hasn't been really a good engagement at pro Vice Chancellor level with what the CETLs have been doing (C13OD). In another research-intensive university there was simply incomprehension: 'When they heard that they got a CETL award they really couldn't understand what it was' (C8OD). This respondent believed at the outset that 'the university wouldn't recognise the worth of it because it wasn't that kind of university' (C8OD).

The uncertain status of research undertaken as part of the CETL's work was an area of contestation in several cases. Research into education was seen as 'secondary' and therefore it became 'high risk for their staff to engage in it, because then their priorities get questioned' (C3NB). In C6(N) the director also thought the lack of support from the Vice-Chancellor was because he wished to prioritise research activity over the development of teaching. In this

example it took a 'situational contingency', namely a change of Vice-Chancellor, to shift the institution behind the ambitions of the CETL.

The most common experience of management support, perhaps not surprisingly, was mixed. Even when respondents felt ignored by their Vice-Chancellor, they typically had their supporters elsewhere in senior management. Some CETLs had very enthusiastic support, as comments such as these indicate: 'We had a lot of support and advice from senior people' (C9OD); 'There was certainly a lot of encouragement from the sort of University [...] we had good support from on high' (C12OD). However, support in several cases only came after some considerable time. In C6N and C8O, discussed above, the VC's support only came because of a change of personnel.

The varied experience of the CETLs reflects the arbitrary, contingent and volatile nature of senior managers' attitudes to teaching and learning which has been found in other contexts (Challis, Holt, and Palmer 2010; Gosling 2009). Change in senior management worked in favour of some CETLs, but in the case of C10O continual changes in senior post holders led to increasing incomprehension of the CETL's goals and nearly to the resignation of the director. CETL teams worked hard on winning the argument for the importance of their goals. This took time and some considerable energy and in some cases success was only achieved near the end of the funding (C4, C5, C6, C7, C14). This experience highlights the time needed to achieve change.

### ***Response from central departments***

Most CETLs appear to have worked well with central departments, particularly educational development units, but where contestation occurred it was because CETLs were perceived as 'other' - challenging the status quo. One respondent spoke of the 'obstacles and barriers' put in their way as they, struggled 'within university systems and processes' (C15OM,2008). 'I was surprised that we've had to fight for every bit of help in terms of the operational stuff. Naively we thought that the marketing department, the head of events would help us but they've got their own programmes and their own business plans.' (C2NM,2008)

This sense of having to battle to get support from the centre manifested itself in some acute ways with respect to the capital funding which involved working with estates and finance departments. One respondent described this process as a 'nightmare' (C4NB/D). Another described the 'constant battle' to get financial information relating to the CETL (C10OD). There

was a sense that CETL could be perceived as up-starts disputing the expertise of those with responsibility for particular university services.

'There are certain people in the institution who have responsibility for things like e-learning or student support who don't see us as helpful, they see us as threatening because we've got bold ideas.' (C5ND)

Suspicion and fear resulted because there was incomprehension of the CETL's goals. When one CETL wanted to recruit users of the service as teachers 'one or two of the senior managers at the university looked at me and said Audrey [pseudonym] we don't know what you're doing here, we don't understand it' (C8OD).

### ***From bidding rhetoric to the reality of micro-politics***

Abbas and Mclean (2003) suggested that funded projects tend to distort 'communicative action' and reduce 'communicative competence'. Unequal power relationships between the bidder and funding agency lead to strategic communication or 'counterfeit reflection' (Clegg, 1999, 177) geared to achieving success in the bidding process. Some of the distorting tactics used within the rhetorical 'game' of bid-writing (Gosling & Hannan 2007b) led to CETLs being contested once institutions achieved a successful bid.

The bid-writing process sometimes created groupings that failed to reflect the social reality of the institution and masked differences in power-relations. This is illustrated in C3 which we have noted above ran into opposition from the deans. Three quite separate academic areas were brought together in the bid resulting in 'quite an innovative bid to put forward' synthesizing what they had in common. There was confidence that 'the institutional commitment [was] very sound' because the other heads of school were saying "yes, we would really like to engage with this, we can learn from this" (C3NB2005).

But because the idea for the CETL had been created within a restricted team, few people outside this team understood the driving ideas behind the CETL. The bid assumed that it was 'a good model to build on to learn from each other' (C3NB) but this depended on there being a willingness on behalf of key individuals to accept a need to 'learn from each other'. This required a commitment to a significant level of 'sensemaking' (Weick 1995) for which institutional leaders were unprepared. Deans were hostile and claimed not to know about the plans, although

‘they’d been informed all about it and it was almost like “well we don’t know about this” and “what are you suggesting now” and yet they had all the paperwork’ (C3NB).

Subsequently, colleagues within one of the departments central to the bid removed their support – ‘I was disappointed that [names department] weren’t able to pick up and run with it’ (C3NB). This withdrawal undermined the assumption, made by the policymakers, that it would be the work judged to be excellent in the bid which would form the basis of the CETL (HEFCE, 2004).

This example illustrates that while the micro-politics had been successfully negotiated within the bid-writing team, the macro-politics could not be negotiated until funding had been awarded. Only then could an 'emergent strategy' be developed which meant creating an entirely new organisational unit which required two years to be set-up. Eventually some success was achieved, but only after a prolonged internal struggle.

### ***Lack of alignment between bid and institutional culture***

Sometimes CETLs discovered that the project they were committed to was at odds with the prevailing culture of the institution. In an ancient university with dispersed power structures (C11O), the pedagogic presuppositions upon which the bid was based had never been tested with a wider cross-section of academics and subsequently they challenged the assumptions upon which it had been made. As is common, most academic staff had not taken an interest in the bidding process, yet the implementation of the bid required the co-operation of that wider cross-section of the university.

Once the CETL was awarded, this lack of alignment between the presupposition of the bid and senior staff became apparent. The contested nature of the bid affected the operation of the CETL throughout its life, and although it did find enthusiasts willing to engage with its declared mission, this remained an on-going challenge: ‘the most difficult thing has been getting people to understand the agenda that we’re trying to address’ (C11OM).

When a new director was appointed, a shift in emphasis and language was achieved to reduce the level of contestation. The CETL was able to work in a semi-autonomous way that successfully promoted research and piloted programmes, but the CETL staff felt that ‘It was disappointing that what seemed like relatively small amounts of money couldn't be found from within the university system’ (C11OM). Here the 'vision' for the CETL was not shared by the

senior academics in the early years of the CETL, though today according to C11's current website, 'the legacy of the CETL.... is that all divisions are now active in supporting the career development of their researchers'.

### ***Lack of alignment between bid and academic department***

In two of our case studies the site of contestation was with the home department. In both cases bids were written as an opportunity to compensate for being a 'Cinderella' discipline (CO9), or out of 'sheer desperation' because the area had 'received no support in terms of teaching input from any of the other schools in the uni although it had been run for eight years' (C8D2006). In both cases the areas had lower epistemological status because they were outside the strong framing (Bernstein, 2000) of the main discipline, and were interdisciplinary and 'applied'.

While the first head of department who had supported the bid for C9O was 'moderately interested', a newly appointed head 'knew absolutely nothing about the CETL. For him it had been of no interest at all, quite understandably in terms of his intellectual interests'. Not only was the work of the CETL outside his area of interest he was 'fairly sceptical about the importance' of the CETL focus. The problem was not simply at the level of the head of department, 'So I suddenly realised that actually there were probably quite a lot of people who, a year in, knew nothing about us' (C9OD). Behind this indifference by colleagues was a fundamental divergence about the nature of the discipline. The director of this CETL tried not to alienate his own department but, for the project to advance, he needed to transform his identity from a departmental academic to an advocate of his project working entirely outside his discipline.

In the second case (C8O) the CETL's focus was regarded as 'very marginal' to all the six schools involved. Prior to the formation of the CETL there had 'never been any forum or means of sharing with each other both what they were teaching let alone sharing teaching or building curriculum' (C8OD2006). As a result the first year was 'spent trying to build some connections and some dialogue between the six schools' despite the fact that there was 'very little understanding' of the project's aims. In what was described as a 'very competitive environment' in which learning and teaching had a 'small profile' building a network of supporters was stressful and difficult, but ultimately successful.

### ***The mandate to achieve change***

The examples cited in the previous sections all illustrate a fundamental area of contestation - namely the CETLs' mandate to achieve change. HEFCE believed that by awarding the title and funds, CETLs would be able to implement change, but those who were being invited to change their 'practice' had never had the opportunity to view, let alone sign, the 'contract', literally or metaphorically. HEFCE's assumption that CETLs would be spreading 'good practice' took no account of intra-departmental rivalries and deeply felt differences of academic values or of principled indifference to the goals of the initiative. The key to the difficulty was expressed by one respondent:

'We were told to bring about institutional change but we weren't necessarily given permission by the institution to bring about that change.' (C5ND)

CETL directors typically did not have 'role power' (Sayers 2005) to be able to mandate or influence change within existing authority structures. Respondents' comments made it clear that they did not occupy a position which allowed them to have that influence, nor in some cases, did they seek to have that influence. The fundamental flaw was that the allocation of funding could not be made conditional on the CETL occupying a position within the decision-making processes of the university that would allow them to perform the role HEFCE intended.

These situations arose because the bidding process required engagement with a discursive form that gave a high priority to pedagogy. But pedagogy did not necessarily have priority in the wider institution. In these cases the articulation of the CETL's claim to 'excellence' was framed within a discourse that had little or no credibility with colleagues who had not been fully 'captured by the discursive forms' (Trowler 2001) embedded in the CETL initiative. The bids were not a distortion of the truth about the excellence of the teaching, but they were constructed for a particular purpose which meant (a) they made presuppositions which often differed in fundamental ways from those of the main-stream academics (b) they did not give a full picture of the social realities which framed the work described in the bid.

### ***Uncontested centres***

It is important to say that contestation did not occur in all cases. Factors contributing to reduced contestation included alignment or 'fit', continuity and compartmentalisation (Greenhalgh et al. 2004; Henkel 2000; Trowler 2008).

Where bids emerged from within a department or faculty after a process of consultation and iterative discussions there could be a good fit between the CETL and its home department. Our research confirmed that CETLs were least likely to recount experiences of contestation where the aspirations for the CETL exhibited continuity with existing practices, and were directly aligned with the existing culture of the institution or the sub-section in which the CETL operated - such as a faculty or department. For example, in C1, the likelihood of conflict was reduced by conscious alignment with existing policy. The bid-writer had institutional responsibility for teaching and learning and saw the CETL as a means of extending existing commitments.

‘The outputs were about new readerships and professorships in learning and teaching and it all felt very much aligned with the learning and teaching strategy.’ (C1ND,2006)

In another case, where the CETL was based within a single department, the planning for the key developments identified in the bid had already been completed prior to the bid being written. In this case the CETL had clearly defined goals that were principally about giving an advantage to the department by improving facilities. This helped to build peer-support for the CETL and as a result its aims were never contested.

‘We wanted to use the CETL part of the funding to give us the best labs and to equip the labs with the best equipment and that we’ve done.’ (C12OD)

Furthermore, because the CETL’s aspirations did not extend to influencing university policy the CETL did not present a challenge to anyone outside the department. While this does not guarantee support from senior management, it removed one source of potential contestation.

In another single discipline case, the CETL was ‘about a whole discipline and about how you brought about a step change in that discipline’ (C5ND), and was described as ‘quite pragmatic really rather than this kind of great vision [...] we knew there were some things we wanted to do and the CETL was a means of achieving those goals’. The developments undertaken were possible because they were entirely consistent with the ambitions of the faculty.

In these examples the CETLs were closely linked to the future success of the home department or faculty. They took an entrepreneurial approach to the funding, using it to invest in ways which would give the departments long-term market advantages. They did not attempt to influence university policy and therefore steered clear of possible areas of contestation.

In contrast, another respondent thought their work challenged the very idea of the university. But despite radical aspirations, 'at all levels of the University we are very well received, they invite us to everything; they invite us to do things in public, on behalf of the University to senior policy people' (C4OD2006). The university was able to accept the level of experimentation without being threatened by it, partly because the funding provided a buffer and partly because collaboration with the CETL was entirely voluntary. It attracted teaching enthusiasts who could pursue their projects without challenging the university's own systems. Although the aspirations were visionary the approach was voluntarist, which, within that institutional culture, was seen as welcome experimentation and the CETL was viewed as successful.

### **Conclusions**

Given the complex interaction of interests and power within the multiple layers of the universities it is impossible to generalise about the form that contestation will take, but we can offer some tentative conclusions.

This study has explored ways in which teaching and learning projects are likely to be contested in universities whatever their managerial culture, but we found that conflict is not inevitable. We only found limited evidence for dialectical processes in the sense that, when faced with opposition, projects adapted to the changed context. But sometimes the changes were quite fundamental and not a synthesis of opposing forces, rather they were designed to avoid the points of conflict. Nor was the 'stage theory' verified by this research. In most cases conflict occurred during the set-up period of the project before negotiation and communication could win over doubters. 'Norming' tended to occur later as project teams became more cohesive over time.

A significant finding is about the positioning of projects within organisational structures. CETLs were expected to bring about institutional change but, in most cases, were not in a position to make strategic decisions about teaching and learning. Where CETLs were created *ab initio* as new organisational units, they remained 'loosely coupled' (Horne 1992), but largely autonomous of any existing structure. This provided circumstance in which changes could occur within the boundaries of the CETLs' work, relatively 'free' from organisational determination (Saunders, Charlier et al. 2005). In these cases, the autonomous nature of the CETL projects was liberating, but it also meant that widespread change could not be achieved, or was not attempted (Turner

and Gosling 2012). In the terms of Saunders et al (2005) they operated as 'enclaves' rather than as 'bridgeheads' for institution-wide change. When a limited focus was combined with clear planning for sustainability, there was greater chance of success. However a minority became linked to institutional strategies which attempted to affect behaviour across the whole university.

We also observed that, faced with a conflict of values, CETL directors exhibited what Giddens (1979) has called 'transformative capacity', namely the ability to reposition themselves discursively in order to promote innovative ideas (Ackroyd and Fleetwood 2000). It was noticeable that, when the values embedded in the project were contested by colleagues or managers, the CETL directors 're-invented' themselves with new academic identities. This meant crossing traditional boundaries, within which they had previously worked, to forge new roles and build new contacts with colleagues with whom they could advance the goals of the project.

We found that grand rhetorical aims (that bid-writing encourages) were rarely translated into reality. Broadly, there was an inverse relationship between the extent of change envisaged and the likelihood of it being achieved. We found support for the idea (in Trowler, 2008 for example) that there needs to be areas of strong alignment between project aims and the dominant goals of the organisational units affected.

Another finding was that the funding body (HEFCE) over-estimated the power that the funding would bring. The generous funding available to CETLs certainly attracted the interest of senior managers in the bidding phase, and during the implementation phase the funding provided financing for innovative activities and technologies not normally affordable. The funding allowed projects to operate with a privileged set of rules but it could not buy institutional compliance to the goals of the project leaders unless there was alignment with the institution's own perception of need (Greenhalgh, Robert et al. 2004).

The support of key personnel within the senior management of the institution was critical (Hannan and Silver 2000). The CETLs' ambition for change was often not matched by the institution's appetite for change, leading to a mismatch between the aspirations of the CETL and institutional response. Support from one or more significant individuals at a senior level enabled projects to survive and continue in the face of opposition. Without this support, projects that aspired to change the practice of others, had limited influence and were forced to look for external sources for affirmation and status. The level of institutional support was not explored

sufficiently by HEFCE in awarding CETLs and as a result some ran into difficulties which could have been better anticipated.

The initiative exposed the limitations of contractual agreement between funders' and senior managers. Managers' understanding of the contractual agreement with funders (with respect to support for the CETL and for sustaining centres after five years) was different to HEFCE's expectations. Situated contingencies, such as changes in personnel and in the financial standing of the institution cannot be planned for and funders need to be aware of the possibility that agreements will not be fulfilled.

We found confirmation that the rhythms of 'academic time' cannot be artificially squeezed into 'project time' (Clegg 2003). Time is a key resource that funding creates - time for innovations to be developed, for research and for trial and error. For many CETL's the process of negotiation that was required so that others could understand the goals of the project took up much of the early years. As a result, projects experienced a sense of time running out. Funders need to be willing to consider extensions to funding particularly where it is clear that the time-limitation will undermine the achievements of the project.

A source of contestations for Abbas and Mclean (2003) was the accountability regime that accompanied their project. In the case of the CETLs, accountability was left almost entirely to the host institution. While some respondents found this lack of accountability to be liberating, others felt it signified a loss of interest in the CETL initiative. Our conclusion is that while an over-bearing accountability regime is counter-productive, project leaders want feedback on progress and where possible access to advice on issues such as change management and dissemination (Fielden, Gordon et al. 2005). This is particularly the case when subject specialists are leading teaching and learning projects since most will not have had experience of managing change processes (Murphy 2003).

In this study we have seen, as organisational theory has suggested, that contestation is productive when it stimulates debate, encourages high standards in the project outputs, and suggests new avenues to be explored, possibly unimagined in the original project description. This requires flexibility on the part of project leaders who need to adapt and respond to the institutional responses to their proposals if they are to succeed. Conflict and robust debate are characteristics of universities, as Rowland (2006) and Barnett (2000) have argued. Conflict carries with it an emotional cost, but, to survive, project leaders need to draw upon their

'transformative capacity' to refashion their professional identities and gain strength from their experience of contestation.

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Table 1

<i>code</i>	Type HEI	Type of CETL	Principal bid-writer	Director	Continuity between bid-phase and implementation phase
<i>C1</i>	Post-1992	Single institution, generic, cross institutional	Previous Head of T&L	Current Head of T&L	No
<i>C</i>	Post-	Single institution, generic, cross	Principal	Bid-	Yes

2	1992	institutional	Lecturer in an arts discipline	writer became director	
C 3	Post-1992	Single institution, generic, cross institutional	Head of educational development	Senior Lecturer in subject discipline	No
C 4	One post, one pre 1992	Two institution collaboration, generic, cross institutional	SL in educational development and SL in subject discipline	Bid-writers became co-directors	Yes (one co-director subsequently left)
C 5	Post-1992	Single institution, single subject (some cross institution work)	PL in subject discipline	Bid-writer became first director	Yes (but first director subsequently retired)
C 6	Post 1992	Single institution, generic, cross institutional	PL in subject discipline	Bid-writer became director	Yes
C 7	Post 1992	Single institution, generic, two depts + cross institutional	Head of Educational Development with two discipline heads	Bid-writer became director	Yes
C 8	Pre 1992	Single institution, subject-specific, multi-disciplinary	PL in Subject Discipline	New Director appointed	No

<i>C</i> <i>9</i>	Pre 1992	Single institution, subject-specific, cross institutional	PL in Subject Discipline	Bid- writer became director	Yes
<i>C</i> <i>10</i>	Pre 1992	Two institution collaboration, subject specific	PL in Subject Discipline	Bid- writer became director	Yes
<i>C</i> <i>11</i>	Pre 1992	Single institution, with cross- sector partners	Head of Educational Development	Bid- writer became director	Yes (but first director subsequently retired)
<i>C</i> <i>12</i>	Pre 1992	Single institution, single subject	PL in Subject Discipline	Bid- writer became director	Yes
<i>C</i> <i>13</i>	Pre 1992	Single institution, generic, cross institutional	Co - writers Professor and PL in Education	One bid writer left, the other became director	Partially
<i>C</i> <i>14</i>	Pre 1992	Single institution, subject- specific, cross institutional	Subject Discipline leader	New Director appointed	No
<i>C</i> <i>15</i>	Mix of post & pre 1992	Multi-institutional collaboration	Subject Discipline leaders	Bid- writer became director	Yes

Total 7243 words - of which 297 words are in Table 1 and 962 words are references.

