LIBRARIES for NURSING - Spring Study Day 1993

SETTING STANDARDS

Date : Thursday 20th May 1993   Venue : The Library Association

These three papers are taken from the speakers' notes at the study day and are reproduced here in this form rather than in "polished prose". This is to make them available more speedily. We would welcome your comments on these - particularly if you have any personal experiences, which can be shared, concerning the development of "Standards" in your work place.

ENB Educational Audit - Learning Resources Inventory

Jean Yeoh

Background

The issue of educational audit was first discussed with librarians at a national RLG NHS Librarians/ENB meeting. As a result a small working party representing librarians and the ENB met for a wide ranging and fairly unstructured discussion concerning the kinds of statistics and other forms of information regularly collected by libraries. Following this a further meeting was arranged and various evaluation tools were discussed. A difficulty for the library side was that it still had virtually no idea regarding the ENB's proposed format of the audit document.

Diana Holroyd, one of the authors of the ENB document with Sonia Crow, had been involved in a 'Quality in Education' project in the South West Thames Region. A set of quality indicators had been produced as a result of this project and a number of librarians in the region had contributed to these. Other accreditation documents such as the King's Fund Organisational Audit (1990), the COPMED Accreditation (1992) and the COFHE Guidelines (1990) were considered.

What rapidly became clear was that libraries are faced with a plethora of auditing and information collecting tools. This is a particular problem in the health sciences field where funding for a library may come from several different bodies and each of these sources has differing needs.

Faced with a large pile of guidelines, statistics forms and other documents it was considered crucial that the ENB audit of libraries should not contribute further to this information quagmire if at all possible. Therefore, as the ENB Audit was based in education in the healthcare field, it was decided to utilise the COPMED Accreditation of Libraries (1992) as a guide.

It was also a pragmatic decision as the ENB document was produced to a very tight schedule and there was certainly no possibility of beginning from scratch or carrying out any detailed research. Reinventing the wheel was not an option.

COPMED Accreditation of Libraries

COPMED consists of standards checklists which contain a series of statements and Yes/No response boxes. There is space available for comments and recommendations. The checklists are completed by the Librarian, a 'surveyor' who might be a Regional Librarian and an 'external auditor' who would come from outside the region. Some items on the checklists are given greater weighting and there are three levels of accreditation with Level One being the highest. Libraries will be accredited for a maximum of five years.

ENB Educational Audit Guidelines

The ENB utilises the FEU (1988) definition of audit which suggests :

- a practical approach to exercising professional accountability.

- encompassing systematic investigation, analysis and reporting of performance, resources and systems of a college.

- the inclusion of considerations of efficiency, effectiveness and quality.

What is equally interesting is that educational audit is NOT :

- inspectorial inquisition designed to investigate faults.

- a device to constrain professional autonomy.

- application of a single rigid blueprint to all institutions.

The Audit describes the four stages of the audit process. These include :

1. Objective standard setting - defining what is to be achieved and why.

2. Implementation - introducing and maintaining operational and management policy procedures to deliver what is agreed.

3. Measuring and recording in a valid, systematic and objective way.

4. Monitoring and action plan - monitoring and reviewing the situation using the information collected, making changes where necessary or revising standards if appropriate.

Who are the Audit Guidelines for?

The guidelines are intended to enable educationalists, in conjunction with service and higher education colleagues, to evaluate and audit their own services. They are not primarily for use by external auditors. The ENB is proposing a 'hands off' approach and the interpretation of outcomes and the conclusion of the audit is up to the institution itself. It is "a matter for peer exploration and judgement" (p.5).

The Learning Resource Inventory

The inventory is not a set of standards. Rather, it is a list of essential areas of practice. A series of questions are asked about key areas of resource provision and there are examples of evidence of performance attached to each question. The question format was regarded as allowing more flexibility in response particularly as the Inventory has to relate to a varied range of library provision including small multidisciplinary site libraries, nursing colleges, higher education institutions and urban teaching hospitals.

With the general move towards integrating nurse education into universities, the applicability of the inventory to higher education was essential. The fundamental assumption behind the inventory was the absolute desirability of fully integrated library, audio-visual and information technology services.

This has always been a long term aim in nurse education, some have achieved it already and certainly some of the new universities are planning exciting new developments on that basis.

Implementing the Learning Resource Inventory

The ENB has indicated a laissez faire approach to audit so it is up to librarians to take the Inventory forward and the NURLIS II Project (Capital Planning Information, 1993) may well provide some strategies for doing so.

The COFHE Guidelines are already in existence and can provide help with standards which can be used as quality indicators. The higher education factor has to be recognised in setting standards. Nursing libraries have suffered in the past from an unwillingness to set sufficiently high standards simply because they seemed so unobtainable.

The baseline has been extraordinarily low and so the tendency has been to aim too low.

The general tone of the ENB document is to avoid an inspectorial approach. However, nursing libraries have in general suffered from poverty of resourcing, although there are some examples of good practice. Some formal system of inspection is essential if we are to ensure that all nursing students wherever they are located, have access to equal quality of service and that the service is at a level appropriate to higher education.

Provision for external assessment is a priority and I believe that this is one of the strengths of COPMED. The external survey can provide an objective view of provision. The establishment of a team of inspectors/surveyors/auditors who have experience of good practice quality indicators could take a stringent overview and provide a lever for improvements.

Any inspection has to view provision holistically. That is, for example, to relate provision on a clinical placement site to that available at the higher education site. Factors of access such as distance between sites, transport availability, accommodation and teaching locations have to be considered. Any survey of learning resources needs to assess the whole education strategy and changes may be needed elsewhere in the system. For example, simple adjustments to timetabling of sessions can be made to take account of locations so that access to resources is maximised.

Example of the use of the Learning Resource Inventory

Performance indicators need to be established for each area of resource provision, eg

INVENTORY QUESTION - Does the grading of staff reflect their responsibilities and professional and academic qualifications?

STAGE 1 -   Establish indicators, in this case using COFHE Guidelines the "Chief Librarian (or Learning Resources Manager) has grading, salary, status and access to decision making comparable to that of a Head of Department" (COFHE, p18). Other professional staff would be considered in relationship to the Librarian/Learning Resources Manager and other academic staff. Salary ranges should be drawn from those used by academic staff. Include a rationale.

STAGE 2 -   Set the policies/strategies in train to establish the indicators.

STAGE 3 -   Inspection or auditing takes place.

STAGE 4 -   Monitoring to maintain standards set or action plan to reach the required standard.

The ENB Audit has created a climate for improving nursing library provision and to move forward but it is up to us to grasp the opportunities offered.

References:

1.   Capital Planning Information (1993) NURLIS II Project. In progress

2.   COFHE (1990) Guidelines for college and polytechnic libraries, 4th. ed. Library Association.

3.   COPMED (1992) Accreditation of libraries in support of postgraduate medical and dental education. COPMED

4.   ENB (1993) Guidelines for educational audit, prepared for the Working Group by Diana Holroyd and Sonia Crow. Sheffield : ENB.

5.   FEU (1988) Towards an educational audit. FEU (RP304)

6.   KINGS FUND (1990) Organisational audit (accreditation UK) : standards for an acute hospital. King's Fund Centre.

The COFHE "Guidelines" and their Relevance to Nursing

Professor Rennie McElroy
University Librarian
Napier University, Edinburgh

My aim is to consider how standards or guidelines are best created, as well as discuss aspects of the actual content of COFHE *Guidelines*. It is clear that standards or guidelines must be persuasive as well as descriptive, and power to persuade is a function of provenance; ie, it is just as important to develop guidelines with the right people, as it is to say the right things.

I will consider both the COFHE *Guidelines* and the more recent *SLIC Standards* (Scottish Library & Information Council) because the latter are a later expression, and take a stage further, some of the design philosophy inherent in *Guidelines*. It is important to note that in content the two documents agree and have many similarities. I notice from my own, admittedly scant, knowledge of the nursing library scene that Capital Planning, in their research report, have reviewed the strength of nursing libraries and suggested that Standards might help development.

The "*Standard setting*" or "*Guideline*" writing process I suggest, is as follows:

1. Set your objectives

What do you really want to achieve? There is a choice, and the decision made will influence your approach to creating Guidelines *and* the eventual impact they have either : to reach the "ideal" library, or : to make some progress in a desirable direction.

2. Be realistic

The approach has to be persuasion, not prescription. The LA can't dictate; LFN can't dictate; the National Boards can't dictate to college Principals. If you try, you'll create resistance to any improvement, even that which might otherwise have been available.

3. Be aware of "*the environment*"

The environment that a policy document will inhabit should influence the nature of the document. Policy itself should not be wholly subordinate to environment, but the way policy is presented is important so we have to ask what environmental features are to be considered in college libraries? In colleges, the first feature is the managerial framework. College principals and academic boards have great autonomy with regard to internal budgeting. There is no overarching body with effective resource power which can say in respect of libraries : "this is good, we recommend it" in the confident anticipation that college managers will adopt the recommendation.

The second feature is the motivation of these college principals and of the academic boards who are the purse holders. Their primary concern is not with libraries, but with education. They support libraries only in so far as libraries in turn support their view of

10

good education. Therefore we are trying to write Guidelines for three quite distinct groups of people, each with different indicators.

In summary, we write them :

(a)   for college managements : to say what libraries can and should do for students, and what resources they may require;

(b)   for teaching staff : to show them what they might ask of our services;

(c)   for librarians :

     (i)   to give an overview of good practice;

     (ii)   to lend professional weight to arguments they will be making themselves;

     (iii)   to give less experienced colleagues some prepared arguments that they might find helpful.

This begins to shape the kind of document you want and the stand it should take. Persuasive guidelines should put as much onus on you to perform as on your colleges to provide. You need a "give and take", two way document in which benefits for both librarian and college can be seen. You need a contract, or, if you like, a Charter.

Early standards were fairly crude, simple, resource demands. They were an open palm with a sign saying "more" and they rarely bothered to explain what the librarian would do with the "more", or how he/she might be judged. The assumption was that libraries were "good things" and that bigger must therefore be better.

These "standards" do not now persuade lay managers or sceptics and we should remember that they were written in and for a different time. They made a contribution, but have less application today. It's a different situation now; and the tasks may be harder, but I also think it's a better situation to be in. But it requires a different approach.

The COFHE "*Guidelines*", by contract, take a balanced approach with a "key" element being that resources are required for a stated purpose, and a stated "good" should be offered in return. (If not, someone isn't doing their job.) The "scale" now has two pans - the librarian can ask for resources and gauge their adequacy and the quality of the college's resourcing and support for its library - the college can ask for service, and gauge its adequacy and the quality of the library service it is receiving in return for the resources it is providing.

This means that librarian and college can each judge the other. The implication of all this is simple. The "*Guidelines*" document must clarify what good librarians do and what good libraries should provide, as well as what resources they need. The situation requires that we put our heads above the parapet, say what we can do as librarians, and stand accountable for our performance.

I think all this should shape the way you go about creating your standards as well as what they should say. The requirements are that you need a profession consensus. Guidelines only work if people keep talking about them and working at them since people will only promote what they like and believe; hence there is a need for consensus. So if there isn't one already, you need enough consultation to develop one. COFHE is lucky in that it's been a cohesive group for many years, but we still had some persuasion to do.

It is important that the consensus should include teachers and managers as well as librarians, since the clients need to own the document too. So - don't write the document yourself in a back room, but use a multipartite group and include public consultation and research in your creation phase. Be prepared to argue it out based on the research and consultations that have taken place.

This can be seen in the "SLIC" pattern and approach to its work; we used a working party to write the standards which included principals, teachers and an HMI, as well as librarians; indeed librarians were, deliberately, in a minority. Also, we surveyed extensively and visited colleges to talk to people, again, principals as well as librarians.

You need realism, by which I mean achievability and also, affordability. We must describe real service patterns and real resource provision. The standard proposal should exist somewhere and exist now. Since standards are "best practice"; not "castles in Spain" - a survey will help to clarify what is actually being provided.

A "framework" :

You need to consider four main areas :

<u>Function</u> :	aims - services from the library
<u>Management</u> :	library's place in organisation - relationships with other departments
<u>Resources</u> :	staff, stock, space, funding.
<u>Evaluation</u> :	PIs, validation, assessment of the library, accountability.

Promotion

You need to consider promotion since it's not enough to consult, write and publish your "Standards". You must follow through and consider how they can be launched, with the need to train, promote, support and monitor progress. This will mean you need a staff development plan for your librarians to help them develop the political and negotiating skills to put alongside their existing professional library skills.

Individually, you need to use the document constructively and imaginatively. Don't just ask for implementation, you won't get it. It is essential to have a plan : work out your strengths and weaknesses; go for them. In addition work out your colleges real needs and sensitivities; go for them. Work with your principal; don't attack her or him. S/He is

your resource provider, not your enemy. Even if s/he appears unconvinced, s/he is the "key" person who can get you to your target.

Remember, you are trying to get *better*, not to get *there*. To paraphrase an old saying : "It is better for everyone to travel hopefully than for the lucky few to arrive".

The "NURLIS" Projects

Maggie Ashcroft
Capital Planning Information Ltd.

Don and Tony put together a proposal for a project to do a survey of library provision in Colleges of Nursing in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to support the needs of Project 2000 courses. This became known as NURLIS.

It was intended as a ground-clearing exercise to establish what was going on in colleges of nursing. The original idea was to identify models for service provision (in the initial project proposal it was anticipated that after the ground-clearing exercise it would be possible to find additional funding for a second phase to implement the models in pilot or testing situations, with colleges still in the process of planning to implement Project 2000).

The actual findings of the NURLIS I survey were horrific from a researcher's point of view - the diversity of organisation structures, the disparity in levels of funding, staffing, service provision - the inability, in many colleges to provide standard answers to seemingly standard questions!

There were many examples of *aspects* of provision which managers felt they had got right, or were confident of getting right in the future, but as soon as one tried to transpose the "Right" bit into the context of another college the conditions were often incompatible!

Basically, it was impossible to establish any "standard" and very difficult to compare levels of provision because of the different base points; the different ways of cost allocation; the different ways of distributing learning resource provision over a multi-site college; the different stages of developing P2K courses, and of developing higher education links.

All we could hope to do in the end was to attempt some basic comparisons and to interpret the data collected in such a way as to identify the main issues for attention in the future, bearing in mind what we knew already from anecdotal evidence.

The proposals I made for future development were these :

> the need for standards for learning resource provision for nurse education courses
>
> financial requirements
>
> the need to disseminate experience
>
> networking information provision
>
> evaluation and monitoring
>
> the role of national bodies

They sound very idealistic expressed in broad terms - but they are attached to a set of reasons in each case, and to the ultimate objective - the need to level up standards of provision - to ensure equality of access to learning resources by users, and to ensure *effective* provision. We made the proposals, published the report, and left the key players to do something about it.

The first and the last of the recommendations - to set guidelines for the manager of library and information services, and to develop the role of the National Boards (and other national bodies), are the ones that are being taken forward in NURLIS II.

There is no strength in any claim I might wish to make that NURLIS II is the result of the recommendation - but it is the result of the ENB taking seriously their responsibility for supporting the role of library and information services as an integral, essential part of the learning process - which is the result of all your lobbying!

The process we're involved in at the moment is informal consultation with the whole range of organisations and representatives involved, those responsible in any way for ensuring effective library and information service provision.

The next stage is more formal consultation with the strategic managers and the policy makers identified in the previous stage - those who need the guidelines for management, in order to allocate resources effectively and make it possible for you to deliver the required level of provision.

During June, there will be four regional Focus Groups, which will take the form of meetings of 20 or 30 delegates - ENB Education Officers, representatives from the Regional Health Authorities, representatives from the UKCC and Department of Health Nursing Division, representatives from the Higher Education Funding Council, College principals or heads of Healthcare Studies facilities in higher education, and librarians who are in a position to influence national, regional and local strategies; representatives from SCONUL and COPOL, the Library Association and the Medical Health and Welfare sub-groups, as well as the British Library. These people will be expected to bring their knowledge and views of all the aspects on the agenda for discussion this afternoon.

In short, the Focus Groups are to bring together those who can make decisions - about the guidelines to recommend to the ENB, and bring about a situation whereby the ENB is confident enough about the issues - to endorse and recommend strategies.

The final stage of NURLIS II is to produce, in documentary form, a collection of guidelines - some will be in the form of policy statements, some in the form of examples of good practice, some in the form of methods of defining formulae, some in the form of descriptions of work in progress, being undertaken by other organisations and groups of organisations.

The ENB will consider the guidelines and (hopefully) adopt and endorse them before distributing them to the relevant people in health authorities, colleges and higher education institutions.