

# The eLIDA CAMEL Nomadic Model of Collaborative Partnership for a Community of Practice in Design for Learning

Jill Jameson

University of Greenwich, London, UK

[j.jameson@gre.ac.uk](mailto:j.jameson@gre.ac.uk)

**Abstract:** A nomadic collaborative partnership model for a community of practice (CoP) in Design for Learning (D4L) can facilitate successful innovation and continuing appraisals of effective professional practice, stimulated by a 'critical friend' assigned to the project. This paper reports on e-learning case studies collected by the UK JISC eLIDA CAMEL Design for Learning project, which implemented and evaluated learning design (LD) tools in higher and further education as part of the 2006-07 JISC Design for Learning pedagogic e-learning programme. Project partners carried out user evaluations on innovative tools with a learning design function, collecting D4L case studies and LD sequences in post-16/HE contexts using LAMS and Moodle. The project brought together learning activity sequences from post-16/HE partners into a collaborative e-learning community of professional practice based on the CAMEL (Collaborative Approaches to the Management of e-Learning) model, contributing to international D4L developments. This paper briefly provides an overview of key project output contributions to e-learning innovations, including results from teacher and student evaluations using online surveys. The paper explores intentionality in the development of a community of practice in design for learning, reporting on trials of learning design and social software that bridged some of the tensions between formalised intra-institutional e-learning relationships and inter-institutional project team dynamic D4L practitioner development. Following a brief report of practitioner D4L e-learning case studies and student feedback, the catalytic role of the 'critical friend' is highlighted and recommended as a key ingredient in the successful development of a nomadic model of communities of practice in the management of professional e-learning projects. eLIDA CAMEL Partners included the Association of Learning Technology (ALT), JISC infoNet, three universities and five FE/Sixth Form Colleges. Results reported to the UK JISC Experts' Pedagogy Group demonstrated e-learning innovations by practitioners in D4L case studies, illuminated by the role of the 'critical friend', Professor Mark Stiles of Staffordshire University. The project also benefited from case study evaluations by Dr Liz Masterman of Oxford University Learning Technologies Group and the leading work of ALT and JISC infoNet in the development of the CAMEL model.

**Keywords:** e-learning, communities of practice, collaboration, design for learning, JISC, case study

## 1. Background

This paper gives an overview of selected findings of the UK eLIDA CAMEL design for learning project funded by the JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) during 2006-07. The article provides an overview of the project case studies, reports briefly on practitioner and student feedback, and reflects on the role of the 'critical friend'. With a focus on e-learning Independent Design Activities (eLIDA) for Collaborative Approaches to the Management of e-learning (CAMEL), the project used LAMS (Learning Activity Management System) learning design software for the creation of learning activity sequences and Moodle course management system for project team and selected classroom interactions. The project developed from two prior funded studies organised and delivered during 2005-06: the JISC-funded eLISA (e-Learning Independent Study Award) led by the University of Greenwich with the University of Oxford and selected further education partners, and the HEFCE-funded CAMEL project led by JISC infoNet and the Association for Learning Technology (ALT).

In December, 2007, the eLIDA CAMEL successfully completed its design for learning work, collecting fourteen comprehensive individual design for learning case studies, seven collaborative case studies, 101 student feedback responses and a collection of data comprising e-learning sequences, surveys, reports, photographs and video clips from team members on the implementation and evaluation of tools and systems to support design for learning in a range of post-16/HE contexts. Activity sequences and processes were tested by practitioners in five different institutions and brought together into a 'CAMEL' collaborative e-learning community organised with JISC infoNet and ALT, to reflect on, synthesise and disseminate developments in D4L within a community of practice.

The project trialled D4L sequences with practitioners in London, South East England, Leeds and Loughborough post-16 institutions using LAMS V1.1, V2, Moodle and, in limited ways, a brief consideration of RELOAD. The project built a community of practice for critical evaluation of and feedback on practitioner use of D4L software and pedagogical practice and was structured into the following components: (1) *Pedagogic*: the 'eLIDA' aspect focused on design for learning pedagogic evaluation, including the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of DfL activities by practitioners in post-16/HE; and (2) *Social*: the 'CAMEL' aspect focused on collaborative social face-to-face and on-line e-learning community

activities. These included the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of practitioner's use of design for learning in collaborative activities using the CAMEL JISC infoNet community of practice model.

The pedagogic and social aspects of the project were delineated as complementary strands. The project was planned with the understanding that designing an intentional community of practice in e-learning for a project team from selected institutions and agencies was likely to be both a challenging and illuminative process. It was envisaged that the progressive bringing together of such a community might result in new understandings and models about the ways in which practitioners use and learn from the application of e-learning innovations in a CoP.

### **1.1 Growing the CAMEL community of practice model from Uruguayan agricultural practice**

The eLIDA CAMEL implemented the CAMEL model (Ferrell and Kelly, 2006) of an intentional community of practice, with the aim of 'growing' this again in a new context, applying to it the pedagogic focus of practitioner design for learning. The CAMEL model had its origins in the ideas and e-learning work of Seb Schmoller of the Association for Learning Technology (ALT). It originated in the example provided by Seb from a 1985 visit to see his uncle's Uruguayan farming self-help group. This group comprised eight members who met monthly, visiting each other's farms to develop improvements in agricultural practice. The farmers developed their work together with the help of an expert facilitator. Meetings founded on honesty and trust were part of a stable, long-standing relationship between the partners in which agricultural farming practice visits were:

- Collaboratively planned
- Documented before and afterwards
- Focused on things which mattered
- Expertly facilitated
- Formally evaluated
- Strong in emphasising tacit knowledge
- Focused on making tacit 'know how' explicit (JISC infoNet, 2006).

An emphasis on practice-based authentic professional solutions, collaboration, good planning, critical friendship and honest dialogue derived from the original CAMEL project. This included the recognition that collaborative work in a community of practice is '*... not just about good practice, it's about practice, warts and all – and the warts are more interesting than the practice sometimes*' (JISC infoNet, 2006). This *mélange* of background influences from CAMEL was imported into the eLIDA CAMEL project, which was deliberately set up to include all main CAMEL institutional partners, to build further on the useful CoP structure and relationships that had begun to form.

In an earlier paper (Jameson, Ferrell, Kelly, Walker and Ryan, 2006) the authors noted the importance of distinguishing between *intentional* project-based communities of practice (Pór, 2004) and CoPs that *emerge naturally* as self-organising systems (Lave and Wenger, 1991, Wenger, 1998, Jameson, 2008). 'Growing' an effectively designed intentional community of practice requires commitment to a range of shared objectives, values and organisational processes such as those outlined above, or, predictably, the experiment is likely to fail.

Just as in good agricultural practices, working productively with people in educational settings requires the constant presence of beneficial elements such as secure processes, stable environments, nurturing feeds and natural elements such as sunlight, water and air. The eLIDA CAMEL project team emphasised several times that long-term relationships of trust, power-sharing and flexible approaches, based on concepts of garnering "tacit knowledge" (Polanyi 1958) are particularly important for creating an effective CoP, as observed by earlier researchers (McDermott 2001, Mason and Lefrere, 2003; Jameson et al., 2006). Both the "critical success factors for CoPs outlined by McDermott (2001) and "structuring characteristics" of CoPs described by Dubé, Bourhis and Jacob (2004) were therefore present, in variously adapted ways, in the model.

The development of professional practice is, in effect, best facilitated at a peer-to-peer level of exchange between practitioners in such an inter-institutional community of practice, rather than being artificially 'managed' in institutions by administrative controllers seeking to achieve performance improvements through external influence. The clash between managerialism and professionalism has been hotly debated for some years: researchers such as Randle and Brady (1997) critiqued 'new managerialism' in public sector

education, notably in further education, for placing emphasis on market values, efficiency and performance management above a more traditional public sector professional ethos. Clegg (1999) observed some years ago that the mechanism of 'reflective practice', ostensibly a benign method of enabling practitioners to reflect on their professional practice in self-empowering ways, in fact 'produce[ed] a form of self-surveillance in which reflective practice becomes a managerialist orthodoxy' (Clegg, 1999: 168).

However, others noted that to envisage professionals and managers as necessarily being at loggerheads with each other was somewhat simplistic, bearing in mind that many professionals are also managers (Exworthy and Halford 1998). Nevertheless, faced with numerous challenges in an increasingly sceptical public climate around the maintenance of professional standards and autonomy, public sector professionals have been gradually subjected to a redefinition of the very nature of professionalism so that, for example, the education profession has become increasingly less defined around autonomy and professional knowledge, and increasingly subjected to governmental control, accountability and instrumental effectiveness based on performativity (Patrick, Forde and McPhee 2003). The relative deprofessionalisation which has arguably ensued has been defined by some as 'new professionalism' (Evans 2008) or 're-professionalisation' (Beck 2008) and remains increasingly subject to the targets set by governmental and institutional controllers. The collaborative work involved in public sector externally-funded inter-institutional development of communities of practice has therefore taken on a new urgency in terms of its importance for reinvigorating localised expressions of professional ethos, notably represented here in the form of teacher professionalism. Since communities of practice offer a self-organising, democratic way of engaging peer-to-peer debate with the facilitation of a 'critical friend', the model is particularly attuned to the development of a form of voluntarily proactive reflection on practice within relatively autonomous project teams rather than one that is externally surveilled and controlled by government or institutional management.

## 2. Method

As required by the JISC, May 2006 project plans outlined key project activities and work packages for an eighteen-month period in 2006-07. Activities undertaken by practitioners in the institutions involved were 'showcased' in a series of visits to each institution, using the nomadic model of CAMEL, in which a democratic 'round robin' of hosted visits takes place involving all partners. During and after each visit, data were collected about the e-learning pedagogic work of practitioners and the collaborative interactions taking place during visits. Feedback from project team and student respondents was collected in face-to-face meetings, within project wikis/ forum spaces in Moodle and after each visit using surveymonkey.com online questionnaires.

### 2.1 Individual and collaborative case studies

Case study methodology and analysis employed techniques advocated by Yin (2002), including the collection of multiple sources of evidence. A series of rich individual case studies from partner institutions was gradually drawn up over several months. The 'case' analysed in individual studies was the holistic institutional pedagogic situation in which practitioners found themselves, including teachers, learners, institutional setting, learning technologies, mentor and mentees. The 'case' analysed in collaborative case studies comprised cross cutting partnership themes emerging spontaneously during CoP activities in CAMEL face to face visits. The collaborative case studies were supplemented by two observation reports provided by the Association for Learning Technology (ALT) and by reflective comment from the project's 'critical friend', Professor Mark Stiles of Staffordshire University. Video recordings of reflections of eLIDA CAMEL team members were taken at the final project visit in Leeds in November 2007. All data were collected together and analysed by the project evaluator at Oxford University and project management team at Greenwich.

### 2.2 Learning technologies used in the project

Project learning tools, technologies and resources used by practitioners and learners included LAMS, Moodle and numerous tools provided via and within these learning environments. Project team members made use of chat, forums, quizzes, web pages, journals, presentations, labels and glossaries with their students as well as external resources. Participants noted in the project wiki that they had used worksheets, NLN objects, Flash, PowerPoint presentations, podcasts, video, word and PDF documents, hot potatoes quizzes, QUIA quizzes, interactive material from websites, Camtasia, Scorm activities, learning assets from JORUM, images and Quick Topic.

### 2.3 Communities of practice approach

Informal, social aspects of the project meetings were important and explicitly recognised as a necessary part of the work of building a CoP. Collaborative plans for meetings invariably built in a number of social elements, including an overnight stay in a local hotel, breaks for refreshments, and meals shared by the team in which there was no formal agenda apart from networking in a collegial, supportive way with colleagues. Project get-togethers were designed to encourage the team to relax and develop good long-standing working relationships.

## 3. Findings

The eLIDA CAMEL project produced seventeen design for learning sequences, fourteen comprehensive individual case studies from five different institutions and seven collaborative case studies to illustrate effective pedagogic uses of LAMS V1.1-V2, Moodle and related tools. Case studies included reflections on the re-use of learning designs and on sharing effective practice in D4L via a community of users. Limited uses of RELOAD were also considered. eLIDA team members collaborated in evaluating practitioner DfL pedagogic practices during project visits. Collaborative case studies emerged from data collected during and between visits. Feedback in surveymonkey on project activities was also received from 101 student respondents.

### 3.1 Feedback from learners

Online survey feedback from students was received in two batches of: (1) 77 responses and (2) 24 responses respectively from five different institutions. In general, learner survey responses to the use of design for learning online activities were very positive, though there was also some critical commentary from students at one of the higher-achieving institutions. Feedback from students was reported by partners during the visits. At the final visit, a round-up discussion of learners' experiences was reported from Institution A, the leader of which said: "34 students were involved from 3 different classes, all studying ESOL [English as a Second or Other Language]; student opinions as collected from responses in surveymonkey.com indicated that 26/33 students had expressed enjoyment at using LAMS sequences; 32/33 said they would like to use LAMS again" (JISC infoNet 2007).

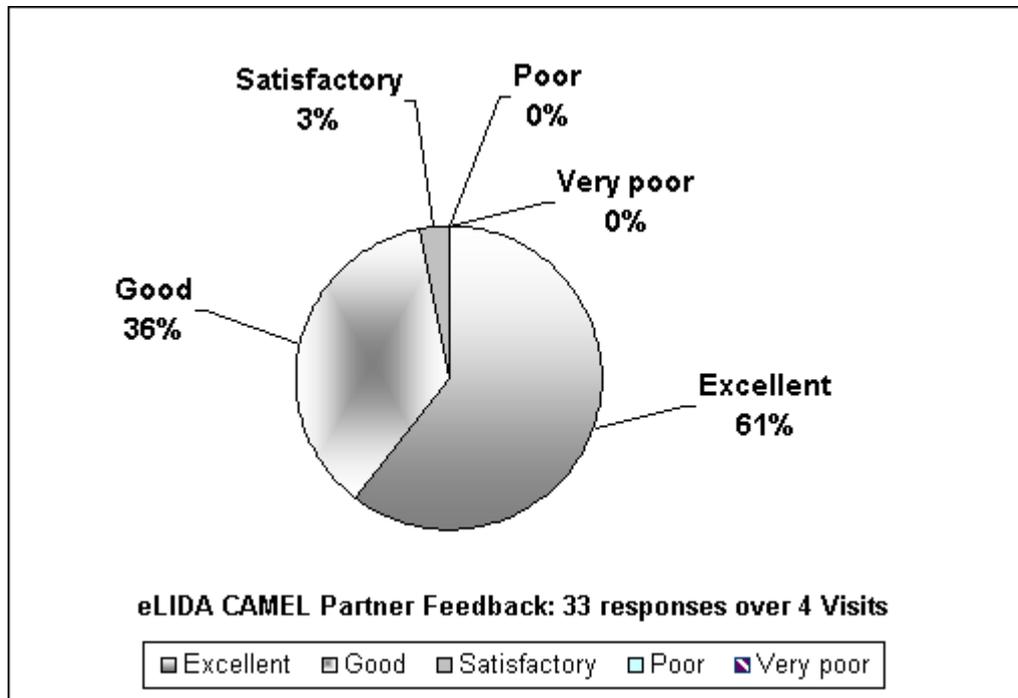


Figure 1: eLIDA CAMEL Partner Feedback from Visits

### 3.2 Feedback from project partners

Project partners gave written feedback in surveymonkey.com at the end of each visit, but detailed observation notes were also taken of all project meetings, recording live interactions between partners during face-to-face sessions. Observation minutes from the final visit recorded several items that partners had listed

as strengths of the project. These included the time given for partners to build up strong foundations for supportive working relationships and to reconnect in early meeting stages to build trust and confidence. Partners reported that meeting times had worked well, while informal evening meals in relaxed externally situated gatherings fostered relationships, broke down barriers, built trust and forged connections in ways that fostered professional reflection.

Partner feedback throughout 33 individual survey grades given for visits over 18 months of the project duration indicated that these were regarded by participants as 'excellent' (61% overall, comprising: 6/8 for visit 4; 4/7 for visit 3; 6/9 for visit 2; 4/9 for visit 1); 'good' (36% overall, comprising: 2/8 for visit 4, 3/7 for visit 3; 3/9 for visit 2; 4/9 for visit 1); and 'satisfactory' (3% overall, comprising: 1/9 for visit 1 - respondent arrived late). No partner gave any grade below 'satisfactory'. Figure 1 illustrates the 97% ratings of 'excellent' and 'good', with 3% (one person on the first visit) rating this as 'satisfactory'.

Observation notes recorded that partners felt the project had successfully fulfilled many tasks that might not have been achieved by other methods. Participants said that although the list of tasks at the outset was "daunting to many partners", they "felt less overwhelmed, due to the supportive element of the team and the team leaders" (JISC infoNet 2007). Team members also said that, "at the outset, having ten partners in one project seemed an unmanageable task but the CAMEL model helped it work". They reported that the "collaborative nature of the project made it a real success, as the human face-to-face sociability element was vital". Team members said "there was no competing, just a supportive environment". Partners also reported that the number of project partners taking part was not too big to hinder relationship building and development or impact on the length of meetings, allowing time for updates on work done and objectives achieved in between meetings. Participants also commented that the team was "not too small: partners could gain valuable insight into other organisations, how they worked, and their successes and barriers during the project" (ibid).

Observed feedback from partners also recorded that they felt team leadership was very positive in "steering the project, following aims, meeting milestones and giving all partners a voice at each meeting", while participants appreciated the "open" way in which they could contribute to meeting agendas and the encouragement towards friendly collaboration (JISC infoNet 2007). Time between meetings, usually 2-3 months, was viewed as sufficient to conduct tasks at their own institutions. Strong feelings were expressed about maintaining the integrity of the CAMEL model during the project. JISC infoNet reported that the resulting success was "directly attributable to the project remaining true to its philosophy". Partners said that felt they were genuinely "telling their story" (ibid).

Participants also noted that: "the role of the critical friend role was very helpful. Meeting each other gave important insights into other organisations and opened doors. Each partner brought something valuable to the project table. The foundations were built at the outset and each partner had something they wanted to share, so they learnt many things from other organisations, small things, things that work, things that don't work" (ibid). Overall, key areas of success were linked with the "designed features" of the CAMEL model, to what Dubé et al. (2004) refer to in their analysis of virtual communities of practice (VCoPs) as the overarching "structuring characteristics" of the CoP :

- Partners felt that the project was built with honesty and trust
- The success of 'designed' features were appreciated
- It was important to state at the outset the vital elements of the model
- There had been careful consideration of the size of project team
- Minimalism had been employed for tasks – the process was not that complicated
- The nomadic feature of the project was a real success
- The project's success lay in the fact that it was "bottom-up not top-down"
- The celebratory nature of the project was an important element
- Total honesty about what worked and what did not work was important.

(JISC infoNet 2006)

At the conclusion of the project, partners wrote in the project wiki that they would miss the "building of bonds with members of the team" and the "encouragement and thanks extended to me and my team for all our work". They said they would also miss "feeling our efforts are valued", the "constant support and positive attitudes of partners" as well as the "enthusiasm for using technology to transform teaching and learning, which isn't shared by some senior management within the institution". They would also regret no longer

having the project's "encouragement to succeed and drive innovation ...the acknowledgement and praise of my team's work." Pragmatically, one participant was worried about losing "the use of the partner's servers" as well as "an independent voice which raises important questions". A number of partners reported that "the use of the CAMEL model in this project has been invaluable", while one practitioner said she "relied on support from the team when my mentees and I had problems" and she would miss this. Feedback recorded in the wiki was overwhelmingly positive.

#### **4. Discussion**

Although the practical application of the CAMEL model was highly rated by participants, this was not a predictable success and it was not easy or automatic to achieve. High expectations at the start of the project aroused concerns about the intricacy, level of difficulty and number of partners within the partnership. Despite this, the model seemed to work effectively as a result of the underpinning CoP elements deliberately designed into the CAMEL model (Inspire Research 2005, JISC infoNet 2006), which reinforce earlier findings cited above from prior researchers on CoPs regarding important underpinning "structuring characteristics". One external agency member commented on both the risk potential and successful outcome achieved during the final visit, as reported in Figure 2 below:

At the beginning of this project the scale, the number of partners and the complexity in terms of different technologies (or amalgamations of technologies) made it rather scary, but the commitment by all the partners and the excellent management, support, patience and hard work of ...[the project managers] meant that the original aims and objectives have not only been met but exceeded.

**Figure 2:** Quote from external agency W on the eLIDA CAMEL project

The reasons why e-learning innovative team projects of this nature may or may not succeed are complex. In some ways the situation is analogous to those arising in agricultural experiments, which may thrive or fail, given their dependency on a variety of unpredictable environmental elements. Within the eLIDA CAMEL project, there was one partner who, facing considerable difficulty, was unable to complete all case studies. However, overall the broader mass of partners guarded against any real loss from that one difficulty. The quantum of success over failure within this project was therefore very high, and the failure within the team remained relatively invisible, in view of the high levels of contribution and success of all other main partners which masked one gap in the outputs. There is, however, no 100% guarantee of success for any project, as all are reliant on a range of complex interactive 'live' elements in educational situations that may fail or be withdrawn at any time. Nevertheless, this paper argues that it is possible to plan for greater levels of success in local situations by building in explicit structures and processes for CoP development in professional communities.

#### **5. Intentionality in the development of communities of practice**

Communities of practice as originally defined were voluntarily self-emerging entities (Wenger, 1998, Wenger and Snyder 2000), as noted above. However, many researchers now consider that CoP formation can be facilitated and that organisations should seek to achieve effective knowledge management within staff groups by enabling and supporting CoP growth and development in "managed" ways (APQC 2001; Dubé, Bourhis and Jacob 2004, Pór 2004). Furthermore, whereas traditionally CoPs were invariably defined as necessarily face-to-face, continuing thriving creation of and research into virtual CoPs is challenging this limitation. The jury is still out as to whether processes of "structuring spontaneity" (Brown and Duguid 2001, Dubé et al. 2004) in CoPs are ultimately effective longer-term. Pragmatic queries arise regarding what happens to "designed" CoPs when managing organisations depart or project funds are no longer available. Yet, despite this, there is growing evidence of significant continuing success in applying the CAMEL model, albeit so far in project-bound time-limited ways in specific projects, linked with nurturing metaphors of education as a growing, creative process sharing many similarities with agricultural practice (JISC infoNet 2006).

The face-to-face and social software elements of the community engagement underpinning the work of the eLIDA CAMEL CoP seems to have fostered a creative, productive and trusting atmosphere for project participants. The project tended to offer more creative, flexible inter-institutional project team working than was normally available to participants in the formalised intra-institutional relationships that tended to be a

day-to-day feature of their working lives. The fact that this was not just a temporary “new project glamour effect” was borne out by continuing good feedback indicating that community engagement continued to strengthen steadily throughout the project. The “bottom up” nature of the eLIDA CAMEL was to some extent a potential challenge to institutional hierarchies, but since the work was both time-limited and externally held to account, no concerns were expressed about this. Ultimately, a feature of the strengths and weaknesses of these kinds of projects lies in the fact that they are time-bound.

## 6. The catalytic role of the critical friend

The engagement of a ‘critical friend’ for the project was a new feature developed by eLIDA CAMEL as a refinement of the original CAMEL model, in which the external evaluator was at first designated to play this role. However, an external agency member had commented in the evaluation of CAMEL that it was ineffective for an evaluator to achieve the ‘in-group’ trust and necessary balance between support and critique that was appropriate for the ‘critical friend’ to do this job effectively.

The ‘critical friend’ was deliberately not incorporated into the project until partners had settled down and developed their work and relationships with each other. Project management determined that this friendly expert should only come in at around the mid-point of the project, after participants had begun to see real work being developed. The project minute-taker recorded from initial meetings that “partners were keen to work together as they were all bringing something to the table to share. Increasingly, partners would discuss issues they encountered in their own institutions, whether positive or negative, during their feedback/update sessions. Discussions would often take the turn where partners had encountered a problem and other partners would offer advice/guidance. Partners also became increasingly complimentary of others work and achievements. This relationship further developed and strengthened over coming meetings helped by the informal activities, which play an important part of the CAMEL model.” (Comment by minute-taker in project wiki, Nov, 2007).

After this settling down phase, the critical friend began to be important in framing activities for the final two meetings. In the latter two visits, the ‘friend’ started to stimulate debate to engage participants to recognise that, although project work had so far been successful, it was unreflective: reasons for success were unclear, being based on tacit understandings rather than explicit reflection-based actions. Participants were, from this point, unanimous in expressing their interest in and support for the way that the ‘critical friend’ joined in from around the project mid-point and helped to take forward dialogue, reflections, observations and e-learning work. The ‘friend’ took project partners beyond their initial achievements, challenging them in engaging ways. He humorously and supportively brought in a new element of objective, critical and honest feedback that had them thinking in new ways. A practitioner and a member of an external agency commented on this (see Figures 3 and 4 below):

It was very important to have someone on the outside looking in. As we were all enthusiastic to use Moodle, it would have been too easy not to question its use and not look at the wider issues. The critical friend raised questions and got us to reflect upon what we were doing and, most importantly, why we were doing it.

**Figure 3:** Quote from practitioner at partner Institution B

The role of the ... ‘critical friend’ has proved invaluable. As part of the original CAMEL project it was expected that the external evaluators would play this part; but the combining of the roles did not work. The personality of the critical friend is crucial as the questioning and probing must be gentle, supportive and yet challenging without being threatening. They have to be a member of the project community for the required trust to develop - they cannot be seen as an enquiring outsider. These aspects could cause a problem for new projects following the CAMEL model.

**Figure 4:** Quote from partner at external agency Y

What needs to be considered is whether the ‘critical friend’ needs to be a trusted and known member of the CoP community already, or whether it is possible to bring someone entirely new into this role, when project partners are already settled down into the project. Arguably, it might be possible to get around this difficulty

for new projects, by bringing a 'critical friend' into all or most of the social aspects of earlier meetings, but not the work aspects. In this way, they could get to know and be trusted by the team prior to formal incorporation into the project at a point at which team members have begun to establish their work. To bring the 'friend' into project work earlier than around the mid-point might seem to be too early, but this point is worth exploring. Professor Stiles commented on the role of the "critical friend" (see Figure 4) noting the emphasis on what it was possible for project partners to learn from one another in ways that sustain and develop e-learning innovations:

*A personal reflection on "The Critical Friend"*

The experience has been thoroughly enjoyable. I have learned a lot, particularly about approaches to designing for learning from an FE perspective.... I remain convinced that HE practitioners can learn much, especially about using technology in classroom situations, from their peers in FE... I think my role was much enhanced by having been part of the first CAMEL project as I suspect that unless the critical friend fully understands, and embraces, the CAMEL "trousers down" ethos the role could be compromised. Also, I found being well known already to some of the partners made establishing rapport with the other, "new", partners far easier. The experience has aided me in my own research into issues around the sustainability of innovation in educational institutions, and has, in many ways, confirmed the importance of the organisational and professional cultural context and the impact that policy can have. I am delighted to be able to quote from some of the partners who have commented on the critical friend role in a way which makes me feel that my time has been very well spent and my efforts valued.

**Figure 4:** Reflection from the 'critical friend' to the project about his role

## **7. Conclusion**

In recording and analysing the data collected in the eLIDA CAMEL project, it became clear that a community of practice had effectively developed using an intentional process to investigate design for learning. The project fulfilled its aim in acting as a 'seedbed' for design for learning innovations in the classroom aided by the complementary nature of the project's pedagogic and social strands. Practitioner D4L case studies and student feedback indicated that e-learning innovations using LAMS, Moodle and a range of other tools and processes had been effectively achieved, beyond the initial expectations of the project. Somewhat serendipitously, the many successes of the project were in part derived from the long-standing relationships of team members and the role of a number of key partners in quietly providing an infrastructure of friendly confidence and support.

Project partners and students rated the work of the eLIDA CAMEL highly and it is recommended that the CAMEL model should be applied in other contexts. The project team recommended that the added engagement of an expert 'critical friend' to work with the project team was important. Participants found that the work of the "critical friend" was highly positive in challenging and questioning people's achievements and incorporating proactive, honest and friendly critique. The inclusion of the 'critical friend' was a key ingredient in the successful development of a nomadic model of collaborative partnership for the development of communities of practice in design for learning. The project also found that it is critically important that the defining features of the CAMEL model are retained if the model is to continue to succeed. In an environment in which educators increasingly face challenges to their autonomy as professionals, a nomadic communities of practice model provides a refreshingly beneficial way of engaging teachers in peer-to-peer discussions as practitioners with a key focus on the development of understanding, leading to ongoing improvements in professional practice.

## **Acknowledgements**

Financial support for the eLIDA CAMEL project from the JISC Design for Learning Programme is acknowledged and appreciated. Thanks to Sarah Knight, JISC Programme Manager, Jackie Kelly of JISC infoNet and Dr Liz Masterman of Oxford University for their excellent support. The author warmly acknowledges and thanks all JISC eLIDA CAMEL, eLISA and JISC infoNet CAMEL partners, institutions and agencies for contributing to the content of this paper. Thanks in particular to Professor Mark Stiles of Staffordshire University for his superb model of the critical friend, to Rhonda Riachi and Seb Schmoller of ALT and to Simon Walker, Deputy Director, for their outstanding support throughout the project. Thanks also

to Gill Ferrell of JISC infoNet for her supportive work on CAMEL and to University of Greenwich School of Education and Training administrative staff, notably Shirley Leathers, Jan Panting and Dr Tricia Meers, Head of School.

## References

- APQC (2001) *Building and Sustaining Communities of Practice: Continuing Success in Knowledge Management*, American Productivity and Quality Center, Houston, Texas.
- Beck, J. (2008) *Governmental Professionalism: Re-Professionalising or De-Professionalising teachers in England?* *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 56,2: 119-143
- Clegg, S. (1999) *Professional education, reflective practice and feminism*, *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 3, 2:167-179.
- Dubé, L., Bourhis, A., & Jacob, R. (2004) "Structuring Spontaneity": the Impact of Management Practices on the Success of Intentionally Formed Virtual Communities of Practice, [online], *Cahiers du GReSI* no. 04-20, accessed 19 March 2008: <http://gresi.hec.ca/cahier.asp>
- Evans, L. (2008). *Professionalism, Professionalism and the Development of Education Professionals*, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 56 (1), 20-38
- Exworthy, M. and Halford, S. (1998) *Professionals and New Managerialism*, (Eds) Milton Keynes: Open University Press
- Ferrell, G. and Kelly, J. (2006) *Collaborative approaches to the management of e-learning (CAMEL)* Paper presented at the EUNIS 2006 Conference, Tartu, Estonia.
- Inspire Research (2005) *Formative evaluation report: findings from the first study visit*. Unpublished CAMEL evaluation report, Inspire Research, Glasgow.
- Jameson, J. (2008) *Leadership: Professional Communities of Leadership Practice in Post-Compulsory Education*, *Discussions in Education Series*, ESCalate, The Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Education, Bristol: ESCalate.
- Jameson, J., Ferrell, G., Kelly, J., Walker, S. and Ryan, M. (2006) *Building trust and shared knowledge in communities of e-learning practice: collaborative leadership in the JISC eLISA and CAMEL lifelong learning projects*. *British Journal of Educational Technology*. Vol. 37, 6: 949-968.
- Jameson, J., Davies, S., de Freitas, S. (2006) *Collaborative innovation in the Joint Information Systems Committee distributed e-learning programme*. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, Vol.37, 6: 969-972.
- JISC infoNet (2006) *The CAMEL project: collaborative approaches to the management of e-learning*. Online: retrieved 19 March 2008: <http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/publications>
- JISC infoNet (2007) *Minutes from eLIDA CAMEL November, 2007 final project meeting by Jacquie Kelly, Senior Adviser at JISC infoNet: unpublished observation minutes in project Moodle*.
- Jones, N. and O'Shea, J. (2004) *Challenging hierarchies: the impact of e-learning*. *Higher Education*, 48, 3, 379–395.
- Lave, J and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McDermott, R. (2001) *Knowing in Community: 10 Critical Success Factors in Building Communities of Practice*. *Community Intelligence Labs*. Retrieved 20 March 2008: <http://www.co-i-l.com/coil/knowledge-garden/cop/knowning.shtml>
- Mason, J. and Lefrere, P. (2003) *Trust, collaboration, e-learning and organisational transformation*. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 7, 4, 259–269.
- Patrick, F., Forde, C. and McPhee, A. (2003) *Challenging the 'New Professionalism': from managerialism to pedagogy?* *Journal of In-Service Education* 29(2):237-254.
- Pór, G. (2004). *Liberating the innovation value of communities of practice*. Report written in collaboration with Erik van Bekkum. Amsterdam: Community Intelligence Ltd.
- Randle, K. and Brady, N. (1997) *Managerialism and Professionalism in the 'Cinderella Service'*, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 49,1:121-139.
- Wenger, E. (1998) *Communities of Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wenger, E., McDermott, R., and Snyder, W.M. (2002) *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A guide to Managing Knowledge*, Harvard Business School Press.
- Yin, R.K. (2002) *Case Study Research. Design and Methods*. Third Edition. *Applied social research method series Volume 5*, Sage Publications, California.

