



Chair's Report

2003-2004

Introduction

It has been a very successful year for FACE with a great many notable achievements. My report will highlight many of these but inevitably I will no doubt miss some. This however is not so much of a problem as it has been in the past as one of the areas where there has been considerable progress is in relation to the network's communication capability. I will return to this issue shortly. The general context within which FACE and its members have been operating continues to be one characterised by continuing change at national policy level. For example, the impact of top-up fees will be far reaching for both learners and providers alike and likely to prove divisive to both. FACE members have been particularly active in relation to the proposals for the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) and we shall, as a network, be keeping a watchful eye on this development.

During the course of the year FACE also made formal responses to both the group being led by Professor Steven Schwartz on Admissions to HE and also the interim report from the Tomlinson group on 14-19 Reform. Incidentally, both of these can be found in full on the new FACE website. FACE has a growing capacity to actively engage in a range of national policy debates effecting members and their institutions. My role has also involved working with our sister networks throughout Europe and recently I chaired a meeting with seven lifelong learning national networks from across Europe. It was interesting to recognise the importance that the Bologna process has for colleagues from other European networks. Here again it is important to note the growing ability of FACE to take a leading role in links with other networks in Europe and to share experiences and views on a range of issues. Taken together our national policy work and our links with networks in Europe illustrates FACE's developing capabilities to actively engage with the major policy debates of the day and get members' voice heard.

I now want to turn to some of the year's organisational achievements and issues. As in previous reports I have arranged these in different sections, each one covering a particular aspect of the network's activities.

Membership and Services

Membership continues to grow beyond the targets set in the development plan. Institution based membership is increasing more than individual membership and we have also seen an increase in the take up of registration allocations from institutional and organisational members. The Executive receives a yearly membership analysis which provides strategic information for taking decisions about membership retention and recruitment. Membership information also confirms FACE as a UK wide network. I should also add that we in addition have a number of members from beyond the UK.

As well as our activities to promote membership I firmly believe that ultimately it is the quality of services and the values that inform these services which not only attracts new members but also helps to keep existing members. I noted in my report last year that growth in membership requires the continuing development of services. The Executive Committee regularly review member services and work closely with the FACE Administrator and Events Co-ordinator to monitor and evaluate the whole range of services provided. Member feedback is a critical part of this and helps in highlighting the areas for improvement and also in identifying new services the network might offer. The Executive has a rolling service improvements programme and this year particular priority was given to a redesign of the FACE website. A well designed and maintained website is essential to an organisation like FACE and so the Executive drew up a specification and commissioned a new website and also put in place a site maintenance arrangement. If you have not already done so, please visit the site at <http://www.f-a-c-e.org.uk> and I hope you will agree that we have made great strides in this area. I would like to thank Jim Tate for all his creative efforts in helping to set up the new site. I would also like to encourage members to contribute to the site via Jim who can be contacted through the site. Thanks also to Widnes and Runcorn College for their support for the site over the year.

Over the past couple of years we have upgraded the newsletter and last year we increased the hours of the FACE administrator. Add to this the work on the website this year and I

believe that FACE is achieving year on year improvements to core member services. In addition to the website, we have also further developed our seminar programme and have been delighted with the positive feedback received from seminar attendees. One final area for improvement has been in relation to the members compendium. The annual member questionnaire has been redesigned and a new version of the compendium will be produced based on this new information. It has been a busy year in terms of member services with many improvements made. Please keep giving feedback as it is vital in order to inform decisions about future developments.

The Executive Committee

As always, I would like to pay tribute to all members of the Executive who have worked so hard and contributed so much over the year. I have benefited greatly from the support and kindness of members and we have had a productive and stimulating series of meeting throughout the year. Thanks to Maree Walker and colleagues at the London Open College Network for kindly hosting the meetings. Executive meetings are very busy affairs but we have managed to have a briefing session preceding the business part of the meeting to which we invite a guest presenter. This year we welcomed colleagues from amongst UUK, HEFCE, British Film Institute to mention just three.

The role and contribution of the Executive officers deserves a particular mention. So a big thank you to Maree Walker, Treasure; Michael Hill, Secretary; Paul Grainger, Vice Chair and Danny Saunders, Vice Chair. I would also like to acknowledge Alison Hughes as a new member of the Executive. Finally, in terms of Executive members, I need to say a very big thank you to Pam Percy for her enormous contribution to FACE since it was established in 1993. Pam has recently stepped down from the Executive and will be greatly missed. On behalf of the Executive and indeed all members I would like to acknowledge and thank you for the outstanding contribution you have made to FACE.

The Executive meetings have focused on an increasing number of areas reflecting in large part the growing activities and interests of the network. The following offers an indicative list of some of the main areas of work for the Executive.

- Finance
- Member services
- Development plan
- Membership analysis
- Annual conference planning and seminar programme feedback
- International partnerships and collaboration
- National policy developments
- Staffing
- Conference publication
- Website
- Newsletter
- Marketing
- AGM

As FACE grows as a network, there is a corresponding growth in responsibilities of the Executive and the demands on the Executive members. Therefore, I would like to pay tribute to and thank all members of the Executive for all their efforts throughout the year. As Chair it has been a real privilege to work with such a creative and good humoured group. I recognise the mounting pressure there is on the Executive members' time and so I greatly appreciate the tremendous service provided. Thank you for all your excellent contributions. As always, I would like to encourage members to think about getting involved in the Executive. If you

would like to become a member of the Executive either get in touch with me or any other member of the Executive or simply come along to one of our meetings which are open to all members to attend.

Administration

First and foremost an enormous thank you to Jackie Leach, FACE administrator, for her excellent service throughout a demanding year. Jackie's dedication and good humour is, I believe, one of the reasons for FACE's success as a network. The University of East London continues to host the administrative base and I have personally passed on thanks to the UEL Vice Chancellor for this much appreciated support.

One of Jackie's main duties during the year is to keep members informed of FACE activities and developments. Regular postings and electronic mailings go out to all members throughout the year and I know from feedback that this is greatly welcomed by members. As noted earlier, Jackie has been developing the annual compendium and from the response the new style questionnaire has significantly increased both the volume and quality of the information shared between members. This year has seen more resources being devoted to the administration services than ever before. This is important because if we are to sustain effective communication not only between members but also externally we need to continually monitor the demands on our administrative services and respond accordingly.

External Relations

As lifelong learning and in particular the widening participation agenda continues to be a key part of national policy I have found that a significant proportion of my time has involved representing FACE with government agencies, funding bodies, the press and other similar organisations. We have been developing our international links not only through our sister European organisation EUCEN but also through links with for example the National Association for Development Education (NADE) in the USA. FACE was represented at this year's NADE annual conference by Gwen Chaney. As part of our links with NADE we were delighted to welcome the organisation's then President Melodye Shore to give a keynote speech at our annual conference which took place at the University of Stirling. Can I therefore thank all of our partners for their contributions. We look forward to working with you again in the near future. Val is constantly looking for ideas for future seminars so please do not hesitate if you would like either to suggest a topic for a seminar and/or would like to host a seminar.

Finally, this year's annual conference, entitled 'Learning Transformations', was hosted by the University of Stirling. I would like to warmly thank both Mike Osborne and John Field and colleagues for all their hard work in making this one of the best FACE conferences ever. To add to this, it was the first FACE conference in Scotland and not only did it attract delegates from throughout the UK but also from many other parts of the world, reflecting the significance of the conference title. The University of Stirling was a magnificent conference host and the memory of the conference will stay long with the delegates who attended. FACE conferences have become major events but have also been able to retain that friendly and informal atmosphere, a strength and hallmark of our conference I believe. This year our conference will be hosted by the University of Portsmouth and in 2005 the venue will be Ireland and the University of Cork.

As mentioned earlier we continue to take an important role in EUCEN and this year I have been actively involved with networks throughout Europe. I strongly believe that FACE has an important contribution to make to the development of lifelong learning in the new enlarged EU. Moreover, I can see enormous benefits for FACE as a network from developing links with our counterpart networks across the EU and indeed beyond.

Events

As with the development of the website, the Executive decided as part of its continuing drive to improve and expand member services to extend and promote the annual programme of

professional developmental seminars. This year, thanks to Val Spargo, our Events Co-ordinator, we have successfully organised a national programme of seminars covering themes of critical interest to FACE members and others. This year seminars titles have included the following:

- Do adults learn from television?
- Working with refugees
- The use of data in widening participation
- Widening access to medicine in practice

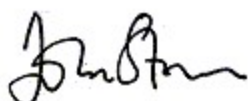
Full details of the seminars offered this year are included in Val's article in the latest edition of the FACE Newsletter. Each of our services involved a partnership with another organisation. As Chair I would particularly like to acknowledge the editorial group led by Vice Chair Danny Saunders that worked so productively on the conference publication from our 2003 conference, and also other members who worked with Val on the seminar programme.

Finance

As in previous years, I shall leave the job of reporting in detail on the FACE's financial position to Maree Walker, our excellent Treasurer. Thank you Maree for all your work in helping us to maintain a prudent financial position. FACE has never been in a stronger financial position, however, we need to carefully manage our resources as well as ensure an appropriate level of income generation. As a result of growing membership and careful management by the Executive the financial position of the network continues to be extremely healthy. Income from annual conference franchising and also from our popular seminar programme has been critical. It is vital that the Executive continues to manage costs and also increase revenue from conferences, seminars and other sources. Our financial resources mean that FACE can continue to operate for a significant amount of time to safeguard our current level of commitments. The Executive and I have worked very hard to improve the finances of FACE and I am therefore more than pleased with our financial position for this year.

Concluding comments

This year, as my previous comments have indicated, has seen FACE continue to develop significantly in all major areas. More than anything, FACE continues to be a network which is member driven in every sense. I believe that FACE is a unique network providing an important space for a critical voice on key policy and practice affecting members. It has been a great privilege for me to act as Chair and I would thank FACE members for all their support and encouragement throughout the year.



Professor John Storan

Chair