

## Interdisciplinary RIT in Sport Science, Tourism and Leisure

**Professor Mike Weed**

*Department of Sport Science, Tourism and Leisure*

### Background

There were two contexts for this project, the subject and the Department.

#### The subject context:

The rationale for the existence of the subject area for RAE and QAA Audit purposes is that there is a set of interests and issues common to Sport, Tourism and Leisure. In understanding such interests and issues a multi-disciplinary approach (drawing on multiple disciplines to understand multiple problems) is commonly employed in both teaching and research. Students in the Department of Sport Science, Tourism and Leisure (SSTL) are therefore equipped with the skills to deploy appropriate disciplines to understand particular problems.

What is less common in the sport, tourism and leisure field is an interdisciplinary approach (integrating perspectives from two or more disciplines to address the same problem). This RIT project explores and integrates interdisciplinary research as a learning and teaching facilitator in SSTL.

#### The Department context:

The Department of Sport Science, Tourism and Leisure was CCCU's largest single department submission to RAE 2008 and the only subject area at CCCU to receive research funding from HEFCE following each of the previous two Research Assessment Exercises (RAE2001 and RAE2008). Facilitated by the Centre for Sport, Physical Education and Activity Research (SPEAR), the Department attracts research funding greater than the national median (as assessed by RAE2008). Following the RAE2008 outcome, HEFCE increased funding to CCCU as a result of the work of Sport-related Subjects by over 80%

A RIT project priority was to examine ways in which the innovative aspects of our current research strengths can both facilitate our teaching practice and further develop our research interests.

The RIT project was inter-disciplinary and was made up of five mini projects, each of which was established with four requirements:

- impact on at least two degree programmes
- draw on perspectives from at least two disciplines
- be sustainable for teaching beyond the life of the project
- have a tangible research outcome.

### Approach/methodology

The five mini projects (together with the amount invested) were as follows:

1. **Understanding the influence of research contexts** (£3,000) focused on ecological validity in Sport Science, highlighting the different results regarding placebo effects that might be obtained in the laboratory versus the field. It examined interdisciplinarity across psychology and physiology with Year 3 students.
2. **Secondary analysis in Sport Science, Tourism and Leisure** (£6,000) involved the production of four exemplars of the use of secondary analysis across the disciplines in Sport Science, Tourism and Leisure for integration into the Research Methods modules and to inform individual studies. The four syntheses are:
  - a) narrative literature review of paralympic legacies (sociology and management)
  - b) meta-analysis of placebo research (physiology and psychology)
  - c) secondary analysis of national statistics to establish size and value of sports tourism in the UK (management and policy)
  - d) systematic review of the evidence for extending the formal school curriculum of physical activity (physiology and education).
3. **Cross-cultural comparisons of leisure policy and provision** (£3,000) involved setting up an exchange visit for students studying sport science (sociology) and sport management to France to collect data and compare the management of leisure provision across cultures.
4. **Motor control in sport** – RIT using the ski simulator (£3,000). The prime purpose of this project was to produce a student-friendly manual to enable students to use the ski simulator in modules across sport science and sport and exercise psychology degrees, and to enable the incorporation of the ski simulator into undergraduate research projects.
5. **Qualitative research on fitness cultures** (£3,000) examined the use of ethnographic methods in researching the phenomena of 'environmental exercise', thus examining interdisciplinarity across sociology and environmental management, including the development of 'ethnographic practice' sessions with Year 2 students

## Outcomes

The idea was to make the research more real for students. They can read about such topics in books and think it is far removed from their experience, so we wanted to show them how it could be done and the outputs. We could just give students some data to play with but we wanted them to be able to see 'real' research. Each of the projects has allowed students to either be involved in, or to participate in activities informed by, current cutting edge research.

Two refereed publications have been accepted/published, two are under review and a further two are in preparation/planned.

Understanding the influence of research contexts – a paper has been submitted to *Medicine and Science in Sport and Exercise*, entitled 'The placebo effect in competitive field cycling' (Foad, Beedie and Coleman)

Secondary analysis in Sport Science, Tourism and Leisure – a paper entitled, 'A Missed Opportunity Waiting to Happen! The Potential of the London 2012 Paralympic Games' (Weed and Dowse) has been published in: *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*,

At last two further refereed journal papers are planned (one each from b) and d)) when the full impact of this work becomes apparent. The work from c) will not form the basis of a paper in and of itself, but will inform, feed into and provide the background context for a range of other papers in sports tourism.

Cross-cultural Comparisons of leisure policy and provision - a report for policy makers in the UK and France will be discussed at a meeting in 2010.

Motor control in sport – RIT using the ski simulator - the manual for use of the simulator has been used by students from the start of the academic year 2009/10

Qualitative research on fitness cultures - paper presented at the *North American Society for the Sociology of Sport Annual Conference. Sport and Peace/Social (in) Justice*. The Curtis, Denver Colorado. 5-8th November 2008: 'Fitness Cultures and Environmental (In) Justice?' (Mansfield)

Paper published in *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, entitled 'Fitness Cultures and Environmental (In) Justice?' (Mansfield)

## Enhancing RIT

All six undergraduate programmes in Sport Science, Tourism and Leisure were impacted upon by at least two projects.

Contact for further information:  
[mike.weed@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:mike.weed@canterbury.ac.uk)