

Face-zine the Future

Pamela Cowan

With the current proliferation of online courses comes a whole new dimension in our learning culture in education. The tutor's role is vital in developing and maintaining an effective online learning environment. Tutors must encourage and facilitate the use of online tools and supports while enabling active participation among all students, encouraging higher order thinking skills, knowledge construction, and facilitating learning through online forums (Kreber, 2001; McLoughlin and Mynard, 2009). Tutors must be skilled at presenting a positive, professional persona within a safe and supportive place where students feel both competent and confident to participate, and feel that their contributions are valued. However tutors "cannot be expected to know intuitively how to design and deliver an effective online course" (Palloff and Pratt, 2001, p.23) nor can it be assumed that they are willing to make the change to online teaching.

This research builds on the work of two key e-learning theorists, Salmon and Laurillard, and considers the interfaces between subject context, tutor expertise and participants' level of experience online. This project

focuses on teacher-educators and the skills and strategies required for success online. Phase 1 of the study has involved an online survey of existing tutors' experiences of working online and the functionality of the platforms they have found most beneficial to support online learners. The next phase will be following up specific issues raised in the survey and establishing case studies of good practice which will be presented in the final phase as an e-zine containing video clips and vignettes. A mixture of Web 2.0 tools are planned for these phases to establish an active online community of expert practitioners who can exemplify good practice and promote continued professional development of online pedagogical practices. The final dissemination event will involve a workshop of activities which will be disseminated via website links after the conference. It is anticipated that the findings from this research will contribute to an informed debate about expectations from teacher-educators in the 21st century and will result in valuable staff development materials for novice to experienced teachers and/or third level lecturers.



Eileen Winter (standing) at an online tutor event

References

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Project page: *Teacher Educators for the 21st Century:*

Face-zine the Future: Moving to online teaching:

<http://escalate.ac.uk/6827>