



Teacher Education Futures: Developing learning and teaching in ITE across the UK

A selection of conference papers
presented on 19th May 2006 at
St. Martin's College, Lancaster

Published by

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Teacher Education Futures:
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Edited by Dr Alison Jackson, St. Martin's College



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Introduction.

The third annual ESCalate ITE conference was held at St. Martin's College in May 2006. This conference provided an opportunity for professionals working in ITE to share examples of practice relevant for the 'Futures' agenda, with a particular focus on new and innovative approaches to pedagogy. It generated considerable interest and we are grateful to all contributors and delegates who made the day such a success. This booklet draws together a range of papers which were presented in workshops and symposia throughout the day and will be of interest to all staff in schools and Higher Education Institutions concerned with Initial Teacher Education. These papers draw together a wealth of inspiration for teacher educators from research and scholarly activity by colleagues in the sector. There are papers on the successful use of technology, ranging from blended learning as an enhancement to learning and reflection to the value of Virtual Learning Environments, WebCT, Interactive Whiteboards and video. Partnerships are featured in a variety of forms; partnership with schools, with Local Authorities and in connection with creativity. And finally the 'Every Child Matters' agenda is discussed from the point of view of setting up successful structures to address this important issue.

Ruth Lee from Leicester University reports on a case study into the online discussions of two cohorts of PGCE students using online discussion boards. The study demonstrates the degree of reflection that takes place in discussion boards linked to reading journal articles and to trainees' developing practice. She argues that, in future planning, the predominant need is to ensure that technology is transparent, at best the servant of pedagogy.

Ruth is joined by Judith Enriquez from Aberdeen University to discuss separating 'discussion' from 'board'. They suggest that the online behaviour of a tutor can influence the online behaviours of students in how they communicate with each other, particularly where learners are accorded greater freedom and less structure in which to engage.

Graham Rogers from Edge Hill suggests how we can 'make a difference' by using a Virtual Learning Environment and reviews alternative methodologies for evaluating the distinctive learning benefits that are associated with blended learning strategies.

Kerry Jordan-Daus tells us how Canterbury Christ Church value their Virtual Learning Environment which has been achieved by using careful application of pedagogical practice from face-to-face teaching and learning so that the VLE is much more than a vehicle to disseminate information but a vehicle to build a learning community.

Ian Phillips from Edge Hill continues the dialogue by considering trainee engagement with WebCT, looking to identify strategies which can make more effective use of a VLE within the constraints of a one year PGCE course.

Ali Messer from Roehampton poses three questions for us: What is our role as teacher educators? Do new technological resources (specifically WebCT and Interactive Whiteboards) have the potential to encourage creativity? What sort of communities can we establish to support trainees? And she gives us food for thought in suggested answers to these questions.

Kate Cleary and Margaret Meredith from Bradford College illustrate how they achieved clarity in the purpose and design of the use of a VLE on a PGCE Primary course to facilitate purposeful discussion.

Leaving VLEs, we look at video as a tool to support practitioner enquiry as Vivienne Baumfield from Newcastle is joined by Rachel Lofthouse from Newcastle University and Steve Wilkes and Liz Kellerher from King Edward V School in Morpeth. A critical component of their PGCE with M level credits is the use of video to record student teachers' lessons to enable a more enquiring approach to lesson evaluation.

Jocelyn Wishart with Angela McFarlane and Andy Ramsden complete this section by discussing the ways in which handheld computers or PDAs were found to support science PGCE students during their training. They outline the successes and reservations that the students reported and suggest how a PDA can support students as they develop as a teacher.

The first paper on partnership is from Liz Elliott from St. Martin's College and Matthew Berresford from Stramongate Primary School. They report on the initial findings of a case study into the use of enquiry groups in the primary school. The most significant findings appear to be in the way that teachers began to behave more like researchers in their classrooms by observing, listening and responding to children more carefully. From a very practical starting point they entered an action learning spiral in which critical engagement with the literature and with practice in the classroom affected their own learning.

Andy Bowles presents a case study whose aims were to develop a broader range of differing types of student experience in schools and to promote new ways of working in partnership with schools. The emphasis is on reflective practice and, although this research was carried out with what are now the 'old' standards for classroom teachers, the need for reflection is equally necessary with the proposed new standards¹.

Andy Hamill and Roberts Meadows discuss the fascinating realm of creativity, exploring the benefits of working with creative and cultural professionals on a BEd course at Chester University. The Creative Partnerships programme in Merseyside enabled this partnership.

Lesley Cartwright with Helen Singh and Sharon Churm address all those interested in exploring solutions to the problems faced by Schools facing Challenging Circumstances by ensuring the achievement of every child in the school. They report on collaboration between Wolverhampton Local Authority and the University of Wolverhampton in training a group of students to work in these schools with a view to employing them in those schools at the end of their training.

Sue Field and Kerry Jordan-Daus from Canterbury Christ Church University discuss collaborative practice between Higher Education and the Local Authority, disseminating the tensions, issues and key themes that are emerging as the Partnership Team seek to develop a community of practice with the Local Authority through individual work. Set within the broader panoramic reform agenda of 'Every Child Matters', this partnership team initiative seeks to engage and enhance the work of professionals from across disciplines.

The 'Every Child Matters' agenda is continued by Sue Rogers who explains how Edge Hill developed and delivered a new and unique programme, specifically designed to meet the needs of Initial Teacher Trainees training to teach across the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

Des Hewitt and Kathy Cuthbert from Derby consider the development of interagency and interprofessional working in the context of 'Every Child Matters' and discuss the difficulties of successful integrated management and integrated front line delivery.

From Liverpool Hope, Sue Kay with Faith Line and Kath Orlandi set out challenges and opportunities posed by 'Every Child Matters', concluding that this is an exciting time to be working within children's services; the challenge comes from making the vision of 'Every Child Matters' a reality.

The final paper addresses the challenge that Liverpool Hope has outlined as Angela Milner provides us with a valuable description of a case study in relation to Edge Hill's action planning approach to this visionary agenda.

The ESCalate ITE project at St.Martin's College aims to give support and advice on pedagogy, curriculum enhancement and staff development in relation to teacher education. We work to identify and disseminate good practice through publications and conference and workshop events, and liaise with other organisations involved in teacher education. Present priorities include e-learning, bridging the gap between university and school-based learning, the 'Every Child Matters' agenda, supporting new teacher educators and the review of Professional Standards for classroom teachers. We would love to hear from you concerning any of the issues raised in this booklet, any of the present priorities and, in fact, anything to do with Initial Teacher Education and the interface with schools. You can contact us by e-mail using this address: escalate@ucsm.ac.uk.

All of ESCalate's work can be accessed through the website www.escalate.ac.uk

Footnote:

1. TDA website - www.tda.gov.uk

1. Using Asynchronous discussion to support the reflective thinking of ITE students.

Ruth Lee: University of Leicester.

Summary

As an enhancement of learning, asynchronous discussion has a value that, whilst not central to developing reflective thinking in trainee teachers, acts as a support, as a medium for reflection. The asynchronous nature of participation in online discussion invites consideration of materials and of the viewpoints of others over time. Reflection as an interactive process is well supported by asynchronous discussion; it helps prepare trainees for participating in reflective dialogue in a professional context but also provides an authentic learning experience in itself. This study illuminates the interaction and reflection of trainees using asynchronous discussion to explore reading materials during a one year post graduate teacher training program. It shows that it is the reflective content of online discussions which foster interaction. The unique opportunity offered by asynchronous interaction helps develop habitual reflection as a professional attribute. Trainees predominately respond to the reflective statements of peers when they engage in online discussion.

Key words

Teacher Training / Asynchronous discussion / reflection / online discussion / online interaction

Introduction

There is an expectation that VLEs (Virtual Learning Environments) will support not only distance learning in Higher Education but also campus based courses. A 2004 DfES (Department for Education and Skills) project noted that in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and other organisations offering teacher training the use of VLEs was frequent, although variable in the extent to which e-learning was developed or integrated into courses, in 58% approved training courses¹. In 2005 HEFCE² (Higher Education Funding Council for England) announced its e-learning strategy. Higher Educational Institutions, including those involved in Initial Teacher Training, implement institutional e-learning strategies. Career-long development in schemes such as the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) National Professional Qualification for Head teachers (NPQH) and 'Leading From the Middle'³ invite professional development and engagement with others through learning platforms and online discussion forum debates. Asynchronous discussion is increasingly incorporated into, and at times an established part of, the professional development of teachers.

Initial Teacher Educators are concerned with the development of reflective practitioners, that is, the development of professionals who are competent at making sense of their professional practice, not only for the sake of efficacy, but also at a deeper and more critical level. Trainee teachers need to be both analytical and evaluative and they need an experiential evidence base on which to reflect, which means classroom experience. Therein lies a potentially problematic issue when planning for the blended use of discussion board, that of providing relevant and authentic learning experiences or material upon which trainees can reflect

through dialogue. Schon (1987) ties reflection with resultant action. Providing an experience of reflective thinking which does not engage with real experience, whether that of a trainee, any peer or colleague, may undermine its relevance, and also its utility for teacher education.

In fact it might be argued that by the very nature of it being removed from that context, online discussion is ill suited to learning that is predominantly situated in a real world context in real time. The authenticity of learning tasks helps determine the significance of those tasks for learners (Williamson and Nodder, 2002). However, the extension of learning by linking authentic tasks to online discussion has potential to support high quality dialogues. Although the relationship to an authentic task situated in the 'real' world context of teaching placements is possible, there are additional possibilities for authenticity in online discussion tasks which may or may not (but often do) relate to authentic experiences.

Research into the effectiveness of asynchronous discussion has shown the roles of social and emotional presence, tutor presence, moderator roles in stimulating and sustaining online discussions and online communities.

This paper looks at what happens within the content of discussions; how reflection and interaction result from the content of statements made by learners using a discussion forum. The unit of analysis is a statement or phrase. Learners typically 'discuss' by 'posting' – leaving a statement of their viewpoint – a paragraph or small number of paragraphs setting out their thoughts.

In becoming teachers, trainees develop new understandings and a willingness to re-examine, develop or change their assumptions. Research suggests that although trainees tend to adhere to previously held beliefs, factors which contribute to changes in the assumptions of trainees include collaborative working with peers over extended rather than short term or immediate time spans (Richardson and Placier, 2001). The opportunity offered by extended time to develop thinking over with peers that is offered by asynchronous discussion therefore suggests that online discussion is well suited to supporting trainee teacher learning. This study examines the exploration by trainees of reading materials through discussion forums.

The focus of this study is a one year full time post graduate teacher training course qualifying trainees to teach history in secondary schools. The course has made regular use of a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Blackboard, for two years, enabling a study of two separate cohorts of students (A and B) to be conducted. The integration of discussion boards with face-to-face university sessions has elicited a high degree of participation from a high proportion of both student cohorts throughout the duration of the course.

Methodology

The key advantage of asynchronous discussion lies in its time frame for reflection. It allows the possibility that, with more extended time for thinking about action, experiences or theoretical knowledge, trainees can develop more and deeper understanding or greater autonomy in reflecting on teaching. This is also true when lesson debriefing is delayed rather than immediate. Williams and Watson (2004) used the incidence of modal verbs to indicate reflective thinking by trainees when undergoing lesson debriefing. Reflection increased where de-briefing was delayed for twenty-four hours.

This study sought to examine not only the incidence of reflection in the discussion forum but asked whether it is possible to find therein different levels of learning where, for example, some trainees realise a depth of understanding which clearly impacts upon professional practice; whether reflection is more exploratory, with no immediate impact upon practice but an awareness of issues surrounding practice or is a means of deciding to act in new and developmental ways. An initial analysis of the boards also revealed that others engaged with materials at a simply surface level. Rather than being reflective they tended towards the narrative or descriptive. The incidence of different levels of reflection, including an absence of reflective thinking suggested a coding for statements.

High frequency words and phrases were used to identify reflective thinking in trainees' discussions. These clues included modal verbs (Williams and Watson, 2004) and

statements of insight including, for example, surprise. Insight statements were not tied to singular types of textual clues. Although modal verb usage accounted for slightly more than one quarter of the total words used, a greater range of signals were used to identify reflective statements.

The discussions analysed in table 1 took place after trainees in cohort A had completed a twelve week teaching placement and were preparing for their second extended placement. An interesting comparison, highlighting the significance of experience in context, comes when applying the same analysis to cohort B, required to carry out the same discussion task, but before they had undertaken their first school placement

The 38 statements, in discussions by cohort A reflecting on future teaching, were predominant and arose directly from the reading and in response to posts by peers. Four trainees used their reading to relate directly to their prior teaching experience. Whilst some reflections such as the use of trainees' own language learning showed clearly the more usual experiences drawn upon for reflection, direct references to classrooms and teaching responsibilities were second in frequency to references to materials read by trainees. Further statements of insight from both cohorts were analysed where modal verbs were not used. These indicated that trainees had gained new insights or had re-examined preconceptions in the light of their reading, and recorded a shift in the authors' assumptions. The discussions by cohort B elicited far fewer references to classroom experiences; trainees cited their reading most frequently and their personal experiences supported reflections almost as often.

A close reading of posts showed that posts to discussion boards included some content that was not reflective (coded NR); it was descriptive, recounted or summarised reading without comment. Some trainees used this type of writing at the opening of a post which then, as an exploratory process, (coded ER) became reflective (Coded R). Other trainees demonstrated a critical analysis of their reading which they related to other research, wider contexts than their own classroom and which examined some issues as ethical concerns (coded CR). A tool for identifying the depth of reflection was developed on the basis of the contents of the discussions. This identified four types of content which, though suggestive of hierarchy, was not intended to be a developmental model. Instead the study sought to identify what did occur in trainees' discussions.

Non-reflective (NR) statements were characterised by writing where trainees described or reported on what they had read or observed or felt, without any expression of reasons.

Using Asynchronous discussion to support the reflective thinking of ITE students.

Nature of Discussion or Reflection	Cohort A		Cohort B	
	Number of statements in posts	Number of Trainees	Number of statements in posts	Number of Trainees
Reflecting on specific strategies for future use	38	21	8	8
Cultural associations of language – implications of	19	14	2	1
Reflection on need to understand specific situation of EAL learner	18	16	9	7
Oracy vs. writing for classroom practice	11	8	0	0
Reflection on subject specific language issues –historical terms and texts	9	9	8	5
Questioning appropriateness of assessment strategies especially mother tongue for assessment	9	9	1	1
Reflecting on importance of EAL learner's historical culture	9	6	3	3
Reflecting generally on future practice	9	5	13	11
Changing trainee preconceptions of learners of EAL (English as an Additional Language)	8	8	5	5
Need for positive regard for EAL learners	8	8	6	4
Reflecting on / exchanging specific strategy tested in classrooms	7	4	3*	2*
Reflecting on own personal experiences of language learning as learner	4	2	6	6
Role or importance of Home school links	3	3	14	12
Requesting ideas for using in classroom	3	3	0	0
Doubting or unable to apply to history teaching	0	0	7	7
Descriptive summaries of articles without analysis comment	0	0	8	6

* These reflections occurred in posts during subsequent teaching placements.

Table 1. Analysis of Discussion Board Posts using online articles and research findings on Pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL)

Exploratory reflective (ER) writers cited reasons for their views, either agreeing or disagreeing with those reasons, or both, but without any analysis or evaluation.

Reflective writing (R) demonstrated some judgement or evaluation about the reasons for their opinions, usually characterised by analysing different perspectives or contexts

Critical Reflection (CR) clearly demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of varying reasons, contexts and assumptions through evaluation and taking account of more than one perspective or context.

Within posts it was possible to identify one coded statement or two or three such statements. In responding to peers, trainees often responded to a particular part of a post, not the whole. The identification of statements was then plotted to show how trainees interacted with statements made by their peers.

Findings

What emerges from an initial analysis of the interaction – in response to Exploratory Reflection (ER), Reflection (R) or Critical Reflection (CR) – of both cohorts is that there was a higher degree of interaction in cohort B than in cohort A. The results showed that within short (hours) and longer periods of time (days, weeks and months), trainees in both cohorts responded to statements of their peers that were predominantly reflective or critically reflective, and only occasionally in response to Exploratory Reflection. Responses over periods of time in excess of one to two days were more common in some discussions than more immediate responses.

Where the analysis of modal verbs and insight statements on the discussion boards showed that, by comparison, there were a greater number and range of reflections by cohort A, the patterns of interaction of both cohorts is similar. Figures 1 and 2 show the interaction as responses to reflective statements made by trainees. Over a period of 18 days from instigation of the EAL discussion boards, trainees in cohort A interacted in response to reflective statements 14 times and trainees in cohort B interacted in response to reflective statements 15 times. A significant difference in the postings is that with cohort A, the big experience of the 12 weeks teaching placement prior to a university teaching session and discussion board may have resulted in a higher incidence of critically reflective statements (n =5) than in cohort B (n=1). This conclusion is tentative since the quality of reflection has not been examined in relation to individual students' abilities and performance on the course. However, it does suggest that the timing of discussions in relation to trainees' learning is a consideration.

The first noticeable difference showed in the appearance, with cohort B, of clear statements doubting or failing to see how their learning could be applied to teaching their subject and a significant proportion of posts summarising or describing findings in articles

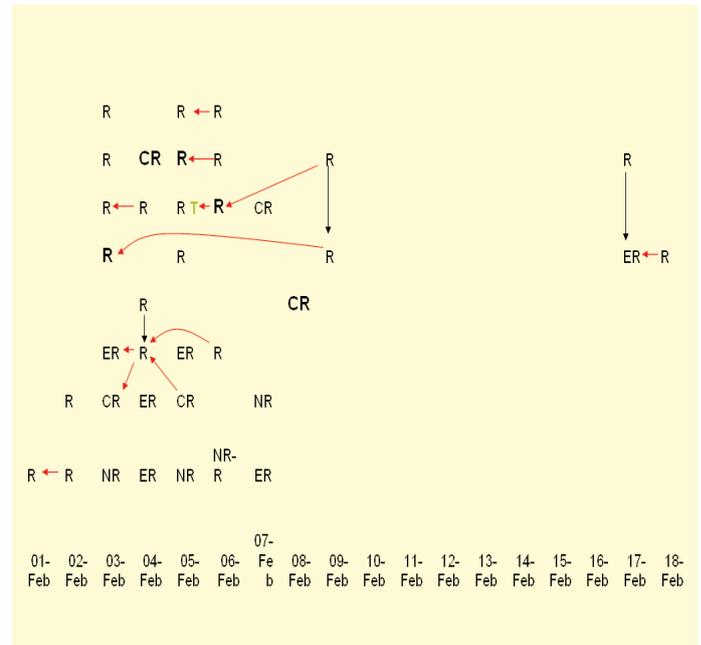


Figure 1 Cohort A trainee responses to Non-reflective, Exploratory reflection, Reflection and Critical Reflection. EAL discussion board.

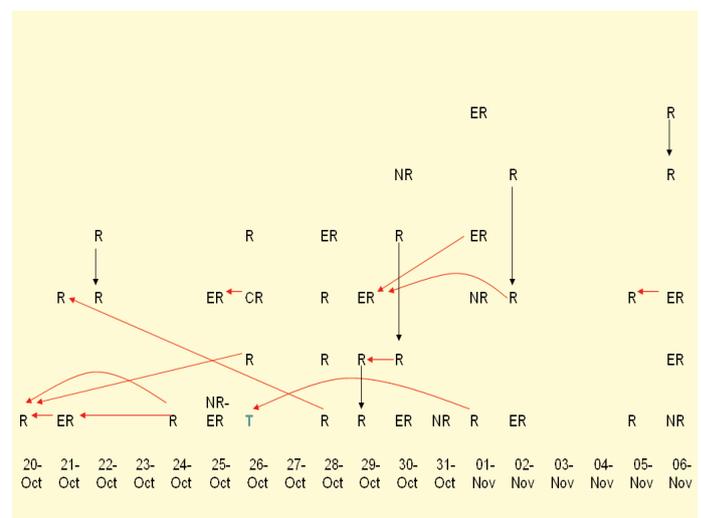


Figure 2 Cohort B trainee responses to Non-reflective, Exploratory reflection, Reflection and Critical Reflection. EAL discussion board.

without reflecting on any contents. In contrast, cohort A avoided summarising articles in favour of engaging, sometimes critically, with articles and reflecting on specific strategies extrapolated from a range of articles. Cohort B in contrast exhibited more general reflection and only reflected specifically or in detail about strategies

for classroom use when they revisited the discussion board during the twelve week school placement. The contrast indicates that for some reflection to be meaningful, purposeful and critical and have the potential to impact on actions in the classroom, trainees need to have some practical experience to relate their theoretical learning to.

Conclusions

Asynchronous discussion is a valid medium for exploration and reflection and is unique in allowing learners to return to a conversation repeatedly. Interactions show that trainees respond to the reflective statements of others as well as reflecting, later, in light of their own experiences of teaching. In selecting materials and designing tasks, consideration needs to be given to the possibilities they offer for critical reflection. The relationship between online discussion tasks and trainees' experiences of teaching is important for authenticity. However, asynchronous discussion based on reading materials does foster reflection where there are few or no prior experiences of teaching in the classroom. As an enhancement then, asynchronous discussion supports learning, it does not, however, offer an alternative to the evidence based reflection of a classroom practitioner (Schon, 1987). At times it unites research, reflection and classroom practice.

Biography

Ruth Lee began academic research in twentieth century cultural and intellectual history of the US before pursuing a career as history teacher, middle manager and senior manager in state secondary schools where she specialised in school improvement roles. Her teaching interests now lie in ITE, training future history teachers and researching blended uses of VLEs as a practitioner-observer. Her research largely involves discourse analysis somewhat reminiscent of her Historical research but now placing the learner at the centre of both her teaching and her research.

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Williamson, A., and Nodder, C. (2002) Using online learning to enable reflection upon authentic tasks, in Williamson, A., Gunn, C., Young, A. and Clear, T. (Eds.), Winds of change in the sea of learning, Proceedings of the 19th annual conference of the Australasian society for computers in learning in tertiary education, (Auckland, UNITEC).

Footnotes:

1. Teacher Training Agency E-learning in Initial Teacher Training
2. HEFCE E-learning policy March 2005. www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2005/05_12/
3. www.ncsl.org.uk

2. Refining planning for online interaction with ITT students; what can be learned by separating 'discussion' from 'board'?

Ruth Lee: University of Leicester; Judith Enriquez: University of Aberdeen.

Summary

It is possible that the pedagogical benefits of a discussion board or any asynchronous communicative tool may not be realised as inscribed in terms like 'collaborative learning environment' or 'discussion board' due to two things: first, as practitioners, we focus on what the technology can do and should do and ignore what is happening when the technology is used in practice; secondly, as researchers, we focus on coding messages into categories and mapping online activities into models. Instead of seeing what is actually happening we try to fit our practices in situ into codes and boxes.

This paper is about what is happening - the practice of blended learning and DB (discussion board) as the technology-in-situ. It disentangles the word collaborative from technology and in particular, that of discussion from board.

Our very notions of discussion or collaboration and our understanding of the so-called 'collaborative' learning environments influence the ways in which we plan for an online activity and how we do blended learning.

To plan beyond models, we present potential 'guides' or 'leads' on how we may design task online by considering the grounding and coupling of a task.

Keywords

Online engagement / collaboration / collaborative learning environment / discussion board / Blackboard / virtual learning environment / tutor's role / blended learning / inter-relationship / online moderation / Initial Teacher Education

Introduction

Teaching strategies use discussions to stimulate and engage students in classroom activities. In the current literature, we call this the promotion or practice of collaborative learning, framed and advocated through our theorising, that relates to different versions of socio-constructivism and notions of 'communities of practice'.

In the current practices of blended learning, our classroom discussions have 'moved' and have been extended online. Teachers and students have been introduced to discussion boards and 'collaborative learning environments'.

The asynchronous nature of a communicative tool like discussion board (DB) is said to support collaboration among students online. And yet, online discussions 'fail'. Why? The reasons we too often read or hear have to do with the students' lack of skills and experience, the tutor's inability to moderate online and the lack of verbal and social cues in using DB.

We do not disagree with the reasons identified above. However, the study that provides empirical evidence for this paper takes a different 'route' of investigation: first, it attends to the assumed and taken-for-granted 'talk' inscribed into the technology as collaborative, particularly in terms of DB as a board for discussion; secondly, by

turning our attention away from models of collaborative learning that take our eyes away from what is happening online. Then, we bring into focus in our discussion the practice of blended learning by ITE (Initial Teacher Education) students and reflect on possible strategies and considerations that may lead to online collaboration.

In this paper, we would like to look into the nature of discussions online by re-visiting what discussion and collaboration mean in teaching and learning; by divorcing 'discussion' from 'board'; by exploring how a DB has been used in situ by the students and their tutor. This 'breaking apart' of DB intends to magnify the practices maintained, transferred and reified within the content of online 'posts' in the context of on-campus ITE students. Finally, details of analysis of the study are placed at the 'background' of our discussions here to foreground the notions of 'grounding' and 'coupling' of tasks as 'guides' on how we may design for collaboration online. Our discussions will be prompted by the headings of this paper.

What is collaborative discussion?

How do we define discussion? What distinguishes it from other forms of talk? It is sufficient to define

discussion as a dialogue between two or more people about a particular topic or shared inquiry.

In teaching in the classroom, discussion is an oral exploration of a topic, object, concept or experience, online it becomes a written exchange. Teachers facilitate discussions to stimulate the exchange of ideas, to promote understanding and reflection and to provide opportunities for students to clarify ideas and doubts and to ask questions. These purposes of discussion are said to be enhanced by communicative tools, such as DB.

We use discussions to implement teaching strategies like problem-solving, researching and collaborative learning.

Now what is a collaborative discussion, in short, what is collaboration? According to Roschelle and Teasley (1995:970), cited in Murphy, (2004:1) collaboration requires '... coordinated, synchronous activity, that is the result of a continued attempt to construct and maintain a shared conception of a problem'.

If we are to accept the above definition of collaboration as a synchronous activity, can we have online synchronous discussion towards collaboration? The answer would be no if we rely on the technology. However, we would argue that the synchronicity of an activity does not lie in how the technology is, but in how it is used in practice (for a detailed discussion of the different understandings of collaboration, see Lipponen, Hakkarainen and Paavola, 2004)

For the purpose of this paper, we assume a meaning of collaboration that is about sharing of goals, experiences, resources or artefacts that is first and foremost, acknowledged both in the reading and writing of posts and secondly, in terms of receiving and sending them. This is to say that the emphasis of collaboration here is not the posting of messages, but the sharing among students, not excluding those who choose to read and not write.

What is a discussion board?

The discussion board in the study reported here is one of the communication facilities in Blackboard. It is described within the university webpages where the study was conducted as:

... a component of a course site. Messages on a discussion board are displayed and organised in a forum-thread structure. Instructors can create forums for various purposes, such as to conduct discussion on a specific topic, to provide an area for student peer-support, to respond [to] queries on course work, assignment and projects etc. Within a forum, students can create threads where messages are posted and

[responded to]. Instructors can also edit, delete, archive messages in discussion forums and control who is allow[ed] to participate.

This rather long quote outlines and summarises common conception of how DB may be used in the practice of teaching given what one could do with it. However, the capabilities of DB do not necessarily or inherently support collaboration. For example, the threading structure of the messages, particularly in Blackboard, is limited to be the measure of online discussion as there are 'ties' that are established in the content of a post, which a thread would not be able to log with the click on the 'Reply' button. Only the reader or the writer could extend the one-to-one threading structure into one-to-many exchanges (see Enriquez, 2006).

Online discussions on the board

Messages are initiated, posted and displayed in a forum on DB. A discussion forum:

... is a virtual arena where students can discuss topics and issues that may have emanated from a lecture, an in-class workshop or a research seminar. Discussion forums are able to sustain the continuous learning process between staff and students and amongst students themselves. (Dale and Lane, 2004:54)

Do discussions take place in forums? What happens in a DB forum? This paper intends to explore answers to this question, firstly, by divorcing 'board' from 'discussion' (only in analytical terms); secondly, by evoking instances of online 'posts' of ITE students, who had no previous experience of Blackboard use and lastly, by drawing these together between and within face-to-face and online interactions through the tutor's role.

The success of using DB is usually attributed to the fact that the tool or the system is not constrained by time and place. Discussion forums are said to facilitate flexible learning, which is particularly useful for part-time and distance learning students and in the case briefly reported here, for Initial Teacher Education students who are largely in school placements during the duration of their course. Secondly, Blackboard is able to store or archive messages permanently. In the classroom, discussions are 'lost'. Online, they are rendered as a permanent source, which students could revisit and revise. Besides, the tutor can then monitor students' online activity as access to links or webpages within Blackboard are logged into system files.

By reading students' messages, the tutor is able to

respond to students directly and indirectly and reflect upon his/her teaching strategies for the next face-to-face seminar, the next online activity, forum or threaded response. For the ITE students, DB becomes an 'extension' of the classroom and of the campus, whilst in schools.

As demonstrated briefly in the preceding paragraphs, the success of DB has more to do with the 'board' - the communicative tool - than 'discussion'. This is an important point to note as to why we have to divorce the two to allow us to think about the communicative medium and the online task not separately, but relationally.

Now in terms of discussion, the board that encourages reflection 'impedes' discussions in some ways. The board does not allow immediacy and interactivity that the students expect or are familiar with in having discussions.

Secondly, the permanence and thread structure of messages make the sequencing of the messages difficult to follow. Ironically, the more messages which may indicate a thriving discussion in a thread make the sequencing more difficult to follow across threads.

Inevitably, online discussions fail. The capabilities of DB do not guarantee discussion. We have to consider how the threading of messages and the long turn-taking delays may affect exchanges online.

Separating 'discussion' and 'board' here gives us the freedom to think of DB not primarily and inherently as a board for discussions and of discussions. For one, we know that in practice, the 'board' is organised into 'folders' to upload class materials, assignments, etc. for students. Hopefully, this will shift our focus to the multiple ways the 'board' could support our teaching strategies and student learning, particularly in terms of peer-support for ITE students.

Practices on the 'board'

In this section, messages are evoked once again to engage and explicate to the readers and/or participants what happened in the discussion forums in DB when ITE students used it in multiple ways. Aside from being a task board wherein individual students posted their responses to a given task, it became a resource 'board', help 'board', award 'board', Question and Answer (Q&A) 'board', etc. Four kinds of 'boards' are evoked as examples in the following online posts. The posts were from 4 out of 21 students training to be History teachers and their tutor in the academic year 2004-2005.

As a resource board

On the 17th of October 2004, H1 posted the following:
Subject: To begin with

Today's Sunday Telegraph (17th October, 2004), contains a number of articles which may be of interest.

Firstly, p2 contains a short article on the possibility of the much talked about diploma style qualification to replace GCSE and A-Levels...

P3 carried an article in which Dr David Starkey once again laments history in schools. On this occasion he calls for a revival in English patriotism (the cynics amongst you will note this coincides with his latest TV series, 'Monarchy', which begins on C4 tomorrow night).

'Dr Starkey said [notes the article] that public ignorance about the country's past was increasing because of the way in which English history is taught. Modern teaching, he said, is obsessed with the mechanics of history rather than with the story itself.' **A topic I believe we have already visited on this board...** but perhaps someone would care to comment further?

Finally Francis Gilbert, English Dept. Head, commented on p27 about the much publicised issue of cheating in coursework. (Thanks to the alleged antics of one Eton pupil). An article which serves to highlight questions of pupil-teacher trust, assessment methods and the worth of GCSE etc... Do read it if you get the chance (Student H1, bold added).

H1 came onto the board with 'pages' from the Sunday Telegraph and his/her views. S/he linked the articles he/she had read with what was being discussed on the board to share to his/her peers.

As a help board

On the 5th of November 2004, H12 posted the following:
Subject: I have a problem! Help me!

Hello everyone! Hope you're all doing well! I have an issue I don't know how to handle and was wondering if you could tell me what you would do (apart from scream)!

S/he asked for help on how to attend to a pupil who kept interrupting the lesson with far-reaching question on the subject at hand. H12 brought to the board his/her experience while in school.

As an award board

On the 12th of November 2004, the tutor posted the following:
Subject: TWO TEACHERS OF THE WEEK

Although this award is meant for the best DBoard posting itself there are two awards this week. [H12] for his sheer guts in coping with so much to ensure as much as possible that learning went on for most despite many difficulties - well done [H12]. Secondly - for thoroughly wonderful support of others and for excellent ideas for ICT/emmlac resources [H14]. Well Done! (Bold added)

The posting was not about completing a task, but about a job well done, particularly for H12 who had 'cried' for help in the preceding posting cited above.

As a Q&A board

On the 10th of November 2004, a question was from H10:

Subject: how do I make an obituary on Julius Caesar interesting?

Any ideas, I have to get them to produce as an assessment piece 'An Obituary on Julius Caesar' I'm thinking of doing some kind of role play of JC'S death? but I'm really fishing for ideas, and if anyone knows any useful websites please let me know too, I haven't done the Romans since I was in Year 7, got to do my homework!

The next day a response was posted from the tutor:

Subject: Re: how do I make an obituary on Julius Caesar interesting?

Start with what is an obituary. Maybe ask pupils what they or their heroes would like to be remembered for - perhaps check with the class teacher first in case sensitivity is needed with particular pupils. Discuss how whether you like or dislike a person might influence your obituary - and whether it should. Is the purpose of an Obit to 'honour' the dead, to mark their achievements - interesting parallel debates over Arafat in the press at the moment and you could use these as examples - read them carefully first. ...

The board was defined by the kinds of interactions and message content it allowed the students and their tutor to have online.

The board 'contained' resources, questions, answers, awards, pupils, lessons, news articles, experiences, emotions, support, etc. Things from outside the board were 'brought' into the board and vice versa. Here lies the synchronicity of the practices of the ITE students (now teachers).

The forums did not have 'deep' thread structures. Discussions did not really thrive. Does this mean collaborative learning did not happen?

Online collaboration 'fails' in our eyes, because we expect tasks to be inherently based on discussions online. In this study, task postings are reflections (see Lee's paper on 'Using Asynchronous discussion to support the reflective thinking of ITE students', the preceding paper in this booklet).

We have the tendency to conceive a post as participation, as a success, and silence or 'lurking' as non-participation, as failure (Feenberg, 1989). And the common strategy to 'encourage' students to participate online or more accurately, to post online, is by 'assessing' their messages. Why not 'award' them instead.

Designing for a 'board' activity

The importance of social cues could not be emphasised more. This has been brought forward as a key aspect of discussion by the ITE students in the study and will remain so in blended learning. However, to use DB for our teaching, we must accept that it is different from the classroom and that its features and interactional structure in an environment like Blackboard requires a different set of communicative skills and more importantly, a careful consideration of the nature and structure of tasks that will potentially 'work' when transferred online. It is not uncommon that activities designed for campus-based courses are directly transferred online for distant learners.

In the classroom, a teacher may choose a topic and may structure the 'discussion activity' around reading materials, student groupings, lay-out of chairs, materials/tools to be used (e.g. Internet search, blue tack, coloured pens, manila paper) and the outcomes expected (e.g. a summary report, a 10-minute presentation, peer-assessment) and the duration of the task. During the 'discussion activity', the teacher is attentive to individual students, to the group dynamics and to the task at hand. She/he knows who was actively involved and who had been indifferent or quiet. She/he ensures that questions are answered and doubts are clarified.

In the classroom, a well-structured 'discussion activity' is perceived to be of major importance for discussion to take place. It is not different online. However, we are not going to facilitate in a physical space and 'discussions' are going to be written and recorded.

In both occasions, we know that the role of the tutor or teacher is central as 'designer' and 'moderator' of the 'discussion activity'. The tutor must have an awareness of the ways in which DB may be used for a successful activity on the 'board' and how the interplay of pedagogical objectives and the capabilities of DB may guide the design and moderation of a 'board' activity.

How do we begin to strategise for an online 'board' activity? First, we have to understand that discussion or collaboration is not inherent in the capabilities technologies, even those we call as 'collaborative learning environment', such as Blackboard. Secondly, notions of 'grounding' in communication and 'coupling' of tasks are introduced to assist us in designing 'board' activities.

First, 'grounding' '... is the collective process by which the participants try to reach ... mutual belief' (Clark and Brennan, 1991:129) and in terms of a 'board' activity, we could take it to mean as the process of trying to reach a common goal, understanding or outcome. In addition, Clark and Brennan (1991) have introduced the 'principle of least collaborative effort', which is trying to ground with as little combined effort among participants as possible. They have analysed the nature of asynchronous electronic communication like DB and listed a number of factors that characterise different media and influence each of the grounding processes in discussion.

These are: copresence (same physical environment); visibility (visible to each other); audibility (speech); contemporality (message received immediately); simultaneity (both speakers can send and receive); sequentiality (turns in sequence); reviewability (able to review messages); and revisability (able to revise message before sending).

Classroom discussion is characterised by six of the factors above, excluding reviewability and revisability, which are the factors that characterise DB (including email). Students' perception of DB reiterates these two characteristics. Students refer to the discussion area as a 'recording space' that may save their time and effort for an activity, like group debate online (see Enriquez, 2005). In short, the 'board' activity must include in its objective a purpose for writing and revisiting. A mere space for written conversations is not sufficient to ground the task within the perceived value or usefulness of the medium.

Second, 'coupling' refers to the type of communication an activity requires, which is reflected in the nature or design of the activity itself (Olson and Olson, 2000). There are two types of coupling; tightly coupled and loosely coupled. Tasks that require rapid feedback and rich information are considered tightly coupled. Those that are more routine and procedural are considered loosely coupled. In general, loosely coupled tasks (e.g. Maths, ICT-related) are perceived to be more suitable online as reported in Enriquez (2005) by undergraduates from the same university as the ITE students here and re-iterated below by H16:

If the task is ICT based then I would find online teaching to be of more benefit.

In addition, Olson and Olson (2000) suggested that the more common ground the participants have, the less discussion or interaction is required to understand a situation and accomplish a given task.

In this light, we design tasks that primarily establish a common ground. For example, the tutor of the ITE students briefly cited here had provided for students a common artefact, text or article to 'think with' and to 'think about' in most of the tasks extended online. In blended learning, a common ground may be initiated in face-to-face meetings or seminars with the students. As H9 said:

For teaching, you can get your initial point across by face-to-face and ensure that students have understood task, then you can get a task online and monitor student responses.

Then, the reviewability and the revisability of DB must be taken into account. To illustrate this, one of the online tasks of the ITE students was:

Summarise your own views of why schools should include history in the curriculum, what you feel should be taught, how and why.

You may wish to argue that history should be part of the core curriculum but at this stage it is not a necessity - it is really more important to define your own philosophy. If your reading has helped shape your views indicate the sources you have used.

You may also find your views changing. You may return to this discussion board at a later date to review your initial statements and develop your ideas further. **You may find points of agreement with others - comment on these.** (Bold added)

This was one of the first online tasks of the students. Within its content, note that aside from outlining the task at hand, revisiting and reviewing of postings and commenting on others (as emphasised in bold) were encouraged by the tutor and framed within the task itself.

Concluding Remarks

We have to reconsider our understandings of discussion and collaboration in the practice of blended learning, especially when applications prefixed with 'collaborative' 'populate' current literature.

In this paper, we have considered divorcing discussion from board to 'see' what is happening on the board in-situ. We focused on what the ITE students and their tutor were doing online. The board became a place for resource sharing, help and support, question and answer and reflection.

In our notion of collaboration, we emphasise sharing, instead of posting in forums. This is to say, that the synchronicity of an activity does not lie in how the technology is, but in how it is used in practice. For the ITE students and their tutor, the 'board' was simultaneously a place for help and support and a space for reflections and questions, where resources, lessons, experiences, news articles, emotions, schools are shared.

To plan for a 'board' activity, we re-introduced the notion of grounding and coupling of task as initial 'guides' on designing a task, particularly in virtual learning environments like Blackboard.

Biographies

Dr Ruth Lee began academic research in twentieth century cultural and intellectual history of the US before pursuing a career as history teacher, middle manager and senior manager in state secondary schools where she specialised in school improvement roles. Her teaching interests now lie in ITE, training future history teachers and researching blended uses of VLEs as a practitioner-observer. Her research largely involves discourse analysis somewhat reminiscent of her Historical research but now placing the learner at the centre of both her teaching and her research.

Judith Enriquez began her journey into academic research from a Computer Science background and a decision to pursue an academic career (a great idea at that time). Leaving the 'world' of technical manipulation of programming codes and system design, she came into full-time teaching in Malaysia. Along the way, in an attempt to bring her technical side into the 'soft' realities of teaching, she proceeded to do a PhD in the UK. Currently, she is in her final year. Her study focuses on the discourses and practices of technology-enhanced learning on-campus, drawing from science, technology studies (STS), organisation science, cultural psychology and sociology. Her technical streak persists in her use of software applications, such as atlas.ti (for qualitative data analysis) and UCINET (for social network analysis).

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3. E-Learning, History Education and the Forging of Professional Identities.

Graham Rogers: Edge Hill University.

Summary

This paper is concerned with the academic and professional perspectives of intending primary teachers on entry on to an Initial Teaching Training programme, and with the factors that impact on their preconceptions. At a time when academic or disciplinary-based courses are at risk of being squeezed out of many primary training programmes it is argued that these courses have a vital role to play not just in terms of transferring a body of useful knowledge but more importantly in relation to shaping students' academic and professional values. Much, of course, is dependent on the format, content and pedagogic approach of the course itself. This paper sets out to investigate the attitudes and learning behaviour of a set of History (Qualified Teacher Status - QTS) students at the outset and completion of their first-year programme. It endeavours to measure changes to students' conceptions of learning and subsequent impact on their own developing professional identity as they progressed through a subject-study course in history that was built on a distinctive pedagogic approach embedded in the use of learning technology. It also sets out a framework of ideas that will constitute a larger research project.

Keywords

History / Primary Education / Learning Technology / WebCT / Professional Identity / Pedagogy

Background

Professional self-identity among new and intending teachers, and the factors that impact on identity, have been the subject of considerable research interest in recent years (Flores and Day, 2006). Making sense of and interpreting one's own values and experiences are seen as instrumental in shaping the successful teacher.

However, professional 'personality' is the product of many competing influences of both a positive and negative nature – prior learning, emotional commitment and investment, the requirements of externally imposed teaching standards, and the jarring contexts of pre-service training and the realities of the classroom experience. Many young teachers have negative experiences of the classroom that overshadow and weaken the influence of their pre-service programmes. Their survival is viewed as one of strategic adaptation and compliance in the direction of narrow instrumentalist approaches to learning centred around meeting National Curriculum and Initial Teacher Training Standards. Further, highly prescriptive and narrowly interpreted curricula, including the National Literacy Strategy and the ITT (Initial Teacher Training) English National Curriculum, carry the risk of compounding the problem (Twiselton, 2000).

Quality assurance standards have moulded teaching in Higher Education in similar directions but, as McGettrick (2005) has argued in his critique of the recent 'Framework for Professional Teaching Standards' (Universities UK/SCOP₁, 2004), quality teaching and learning have to extend beyond compliance and prescription. Where 'standards' are reduced to a low common denominator of compliance with formulaic outcomes, McGettrick warns, they become ossified as a

set of bureaucratic statements that have tenuous links with the real purposes of learning. Learners at all levels have an entitlement which includes the motivation towards curiosity, creativity, integrity, responsibility, collegiality as well as the enhancement of their intellectual skills, all of which are central to the promotion of professional commitment and values among young teachers. Pre-service training, therefore, should be principally concerned not just with competence but with capacity building though, admittedly, the latter admits qualities that are not immediately and unambiguously measurable.

Pedagogic context

More productive and enabling approaches to teacher education are available that borrow from a scholarship of teaching more usually associated with teaching in Higher Education (Daly et al., 2004). They are based on social constructivist and interactionist perspectives on learning which centre on students' own knowledge construction as instrumental in fostering intellectual dimensions to teaching. Computer-mediated-communication (cmc) is seen as a principal tool in that process. Paradoxically, the underlying principles to this approach borrow from much earlier traditions and theories of learning and especially those of Bloom and Vygotsky.

The concept of knowledge construction is fundamental to any debate about the relationship between trainee teachers' knowledge base and effective classroom practice (Alexander, 2004). Although, in recent years, subject knowledge has been viewed as a central pillar in the provision of Primary Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and Continuing Professional Development, it is now under threat. In part, the threat has emanated from a confusion between subject knowledge and detailed

knowledge of the subject matter itself. As Poulson (2001:52) has remarked, 'there is still much to learn about the knowledge which successful teachers do possess (and) about the relationship between knowledge, values and practice'. What Shulman (1987) describes as pedagogical content knowledge may be more important. That is, how to represent knowledge to younger learners and how to engage them in making conceptual connections by drawing on appropriate sources of information or evidence.

But the bedrock has to be students' security in their own epistemological beliefs. The key question that remains is whether ITT courses are doing enough to challenge student-teachers' preconceptions about what learning to teach ought to involve. It is surely not enough that we train students to act like teachers. Becoming an effective teacher demands a deeper understanding of the processes involved in knowledge construction and its translation into effective pedagogic practice. Enhancing students' own metacognition increases the degree to which they are able to transfer their own beliefs and approaches to learning to new settings (Hobson, 2003).

Further, pedagogical knowledge draws on other qualities as well as the formal content of a subject - it would include: a keen sense of the social and cultural community in which learning takes place; an intuitive sense of opportunity for challenging learners; sensitively tuned language; freedom and space to express personally constructed ideas - all of which does not fit neatly into the agenda of 'meeting the standards'. However, in shaping their own pedagogical knowledge, student teachers are still more likely to draw on observed models of practice in planning and teaching, in both a Higher Education and school setting, rather than on their own formal subject knowledge base.

Audit of student perspectives

Students' prior experiences of learning and their preconceptions of learning are seen as the most significant influences on the ways in which students adapt to the demands of Higher Education (Prosser and Trigwell, 1999). Meeting this challenge was self-evident in the responses of a set of first-year students, embarking on a Primary Education with History programme, to an audit (Table 1) of how they perceived the purpose of their academic course in history as preparation for their role as intending teachers.

Most responses (82 %) fell between two polarised positions in distinguishing between subject study as an academic pursuit and the purposes and practice of teaching in schools:

'Before coming to college I believed that that the subject area of the course would only influence the knowledge of history I had, and it would do little to prepare me as a teacher.'

'I had not anticipated that the history course would prepare me to become a teacher, that it was just a matter of learning history facts.'

Alternatively, a professionally focused programme would preclude a deeper intellectual grasp of the discipline:

'I anticipated the course to be very child driven and reflective on children's history and how it is that they view the events of the past.'

'I thought that the learning would just be factual information on the specific topics taught in the National Curriculum rather than studying history at degree level exploring the evidence and interpretations in depth.'

'I thought it would be just what we would be teaching, what the children would need to learn.'

In short, any recognition of the relationship between professional growth and identity, subject pedagogic skills and a sense of the methodological and conceptual basis to the discipline was largely absent. Where that relationship was loosely recognised it was confined to 'enhancing personal interest which would transfer into the classroom'.

Indeed, Entwistle (2000) has argued that the influence exerted by a training programme or by academic reading on the shaping of a professional role has been comparatively weak. But he also presents the case that, at a general level, a sophisticated conception of teaching resides with an awareness of the relationship between learning and teaching. At the outset student teachers cannot be expected to demonstrate that relationship in their own thinking and yet it is present in an embryonic form. Nevertheless, training programmes can positively influence evolving teaching conceptions in several important respects. His research has indicated that, as a first principle, the impetus for changing limited conceptions and approaches to learning, and then to

Category	No of references
Acquisition of a body of knowledge	9
Pedagogic skills in teaching history in schools	9
Methodology and conceptual base to the subject	4

Table 1: Pre-entry preconceptions of subject study and its professional value

teaching, is promoted by a reconsideration of the nature of knowledge within a discipline. In short, that involves engaging students with the 'big ideas' of the discipline at an early stage. It also reinforces the relevance of disciplinary knowledge and understanding to an ITT curriculum. Secondly, confidence in disciplinary thinking not only enables teachers to target learning development but equips teachers to capitalise on 'chance' events in the classroom which are unplanned and yet so often provide the springboards for significant learning. The relationship between these factors is captured in figure 1 and is an adaptation of Entwistle's model.

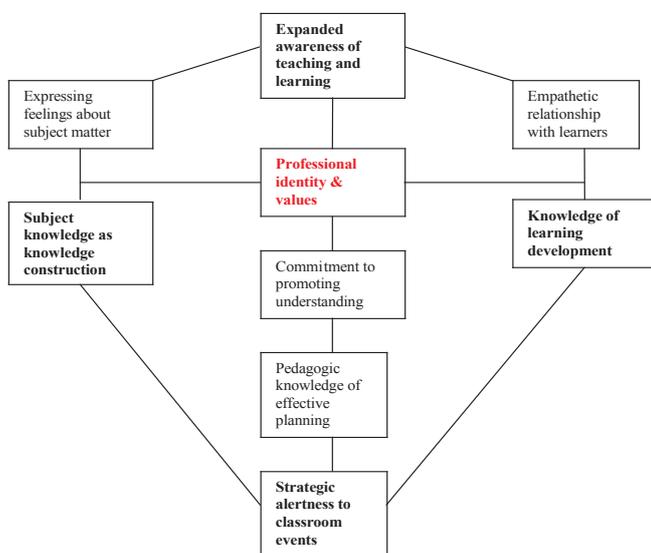


Figure 1: An Expanded Awareness of Teaching

The dimension of learning technology

How the use of learning technology can assist with the shaping of professional values and a growth in pedagogical awareness is highlighted by recent research. Taylor (2004), for instance, suggests that technology can be effective in the wider, generic sense of persuading student teachers to engage with the 'deeper sides of learning' that are transferable to other academic and professional contexts. It is also a claim that is built on an assumption; namely that learning technology has distinctive capacity to transmit a set of values about learning that are indispensable to developing a sense of professional identity. It also follows that the gradual emergence of a professional identity, in the sense of being grounded in a set of values, is constructed around learning that exclude uniformity and conformity and, instead, focuses reflection on a diversity of approaches, resources and ideas mediated through dialogue between peers and other professionals (Beigaard, 2004).

Foundations to History Education

The concerns of this paper address the construction, features and impact of a specific hypertext-based

module, 'Foundations to History Education', which was used to introduce first-year students on a primary education programme to the nature of the discipline. But it also had a wider purpose and that was to model the relationship between ways of learning and teaching with a view to shaping deeper professional awareness. To that extent this initiative was also a response to Brownlee's (2001:262) observation that 'although most teacher-educators would recognise the importance of helping students to develop sophisticated beliefs about knowing, often teacher education programmes do not provide the scaffolding to facilitate this development'. Learning technology design proved to be an effective tool in building this scaffold.

Technology can be deployed as an effective tool for modifying students' conceptions of learning and teaching from the outset. However, its potential for this purpose does not lie primarily or exclusively in the direction of enriching a resource bank of materials. The transformative power of technology resides in its pedagogic design. The work of Entwistle (2000), Oliver and Herrington (2003), Garrison and Anderson (2003), Conole (2004), among others, has contributed to a swelling body of literature about learning design and underpinning theoretical principles in the application of technology. However, engaging practitioners with learning technology does not start with the technology itself, learning design nor, least of all, with theoretical perspectives on the adoption of technological applications. Instead, it is an iterative journey whose departure point is the subject context and its intellectual or professional properties within which the practitioner resides. 'Good' teaching draws from experience and open, critical reflection on practice in a discipline and that must be the starting point of any readiness to explore alternative ways of enriching the learning experience of students.

Hence, a decision to integrate e-learning into a conventional teaching pattern, within a 'blended' arrangement, stemmed from several considerations:

- ♦ An epistemological view of knowledge and a conviction that hypertext-based technology could give expression to knowledge construction; in other words, that a particular technology had features which could be utilised to give students a more challenging and more legitimate experience of the subject, and therefore offer the possibility of enhancing their own academic, personal and professional growth;
- ♦ A hypermedia learning environment can support students in acquiring more complex beliefs about knowledge and more sophisticated metacognitive awareness. In short, technology could assist students in their growth from a position of holding simple, dichotomous views of knowledge to more complex and relativistic positions (Bendixen and Hartley, 2003).
- ♦ Learning design, however, cannot be independent of

specific contexts and properties. There must be a strong synergy between the ways in which a specific body of knowledge is constructed by the 'expert', the peculiar affordances of the technology and what learners bring to the encounter within specific instructional activity.

The design features that describe 'Foundations to History Education as a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) had a pedagogic concern with more student-centred approaches to learning and a focus on key issues: recognising the relationship between a model of learning in Higher Education and the personalisation of attitudes towards teaching and learning; an understanding of how historical knowledge is created; and the extent to which representations of the past to a variety of audiences capture a legitimate concern with genuine processes of historical thinking and working. The programme is summarised in Figure 2.

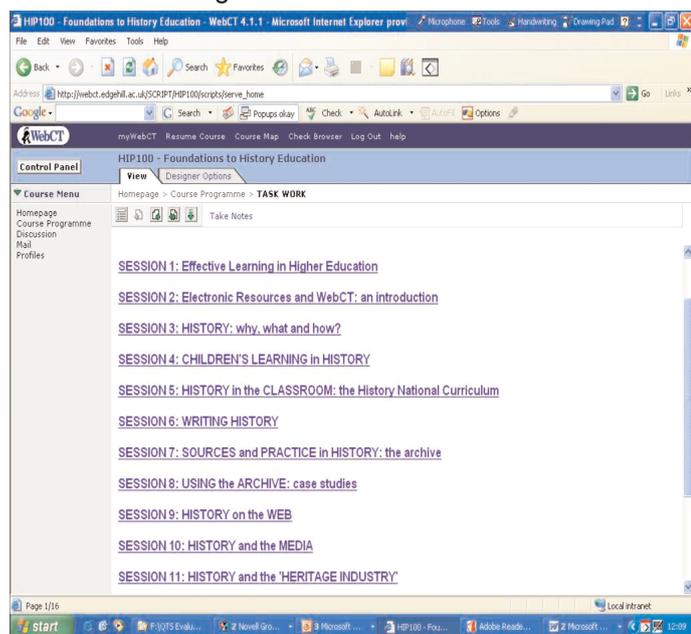


Figure 2: Foundations to History Education

It is a strategy-based design (Oliver, 2002) which essentially has a linear structure to it in the sense of providing a strong 'steer' to students' thinking as they progress through a series of interrelated issues. But it also deliberately encourages contingent thinking in recognising the complexities and situated nature of issues and practice (Taylor, 2004). Each session therefore contained hyperlinked resources and instructional tools that 'problematized' the relationship between working in the discipline and evaluations of how the subject was presented and utilised by various audiences and especially young children. Figure 3 provides an example.

The embedded tasks captured Boud and Prosser's (2002) design features to learning design. These tasks acknowledged a learning context in presenting focused

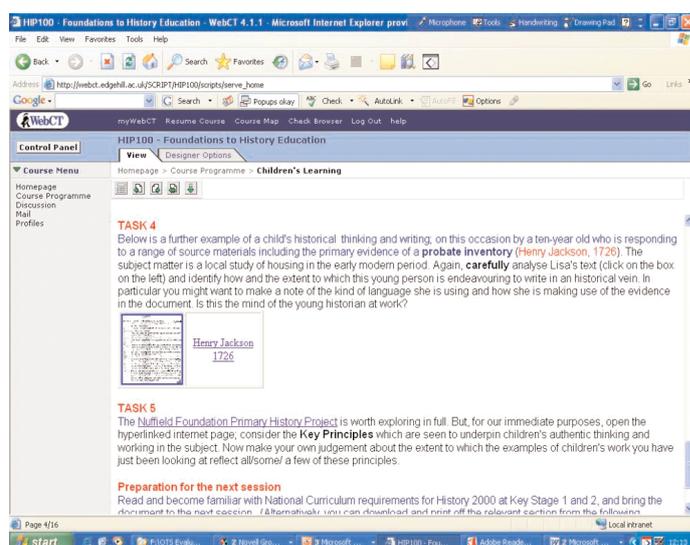


Figure 3; Children's Learning in History

problems and issues within a wider academic and professional context; they acknowledged learner engagement by building on prior knowledge and understanding, enabling learners to experience concepts and issues of the course in a variety of ways, and through collaborative approaches; they acknowledged learner challenge by encouraging learners' involvement in questioning knowledge and experience and critiquing the limits to knowledge; and they acknowledged practice by encouraging participation in the 'discourse' of the domain in both conventional and online settings. In summary these tasks focus on subject knowledge as knowledge construction.

The underlying assumption to this case-study is that a technology-based learning environment can have a significant impact on students' perceptions of knowledge, learning and on their evolving identity as intending teachers. Evaluation is based on text data drawn from two sources - commentaries posted to a discussion board and responses to a post-course audit that included a number of open-ended questions designed to prompt self-reflection on changes to learning behaviour and their implications for the professional role of a teacher.

Outcomes

Specifically, the audit posted a series of questions about the purposes and values of learning:

- ♦ Prior to coming to University how did you anticipate that a subject study course in history would prepare you to become a teacher?
- ♦ In what specific ways do you think the online delivery of the first module – Foundations to History Education – helped to develop your understanding?
- ♦ Do you think that any benefits from the Foundations to History Education module enabled you to engage more purposefully with the second module (HIP101)?

How?

- ♦ As a result of the history subject study modules in what ways do you think that you may have changed a) as a learner? b) as an intending teacher?
- ♦ Are there any skills or ways of teaching, derived from your subject study course, which you would apply to your other professional/curriculum courses or work in the classroom?

The following table distils the number of references to several learning benefits in response to the question of whether and how students felt they had changed as learners as a result of the course.

Category	Number of References
Deeper cognitive and metacognitive awareness	18
The value of collaborative engagement	8
Improved organisational skills	3
Extended knowledge of subject matter	3
Other	6

Table 2: Audit of Learning Outcomes

Several benefits were highlighted but two in particular. Firstly, tightly focused e-learning design facilitated the interplay of ideas about the epistemological characteristics of the discipline and children's engagement with the subject. Secondly, within this process, significant value was attached to the discussion forum offered by WebCT. In an audit of how students valued the online dimension to their course almost 60% of all responses made reference to the way in which engagement with the ideas of others reinforced a conception of history as interpretation and argumentation:

'The ideas discussed helped me to deepen my knowledge of history and to build up a knowledge base of how children learn (and) the different ways we can teach.'

'Reading other people's views allowed me to question and evaluate their thoughts, as they did mine, and gave me a deeper understanding of what history education should be about.'

'I think about things a lot more. I think that I question what I have been taught before in history. Things aren't always as black and white as teachers make them out to be.'

Table 1 drew attention to students' pre-course preconceptions of their subject study course and its purpose within a programme of initial teacher training. Initially, primacy was given to knowledge transfer and acquisition and set limits to how an academic course might contribute to professional development. Clearly, there had been a marked shift in attitudes by the end of the course which identified a more holistic relationship between the experience of knowledge construction in the discipline and effective learning. Further, learning design in the use of learning technology had played a significant role in that process. What is of more crucial importance is how course design and delivery impacted on students' developing sense of their role as intending teachers. Table 3 captures the **emphases** expressed by students' responses to the question of whether and how their perception of their role as future classroom practitioners had changed as a result of their own learning experience in a subject study domain.

Category	Number of References
More reflective about children's learning	15
More confident as a presenter and communicator	4
More organised	2
Greater commitment and enthusiasm	3

Table 3: Audit of Professional Outcomes

This table does not infer that the categories attracting a relatively low number of responses did not matter to students. Instead, it reflects what was to the fore of what they had come to value in relation to their own professional awareness and purposes as a direct result of their course:

'I intend to be a 'facilitator of knowledge' and help children develop skills such as questioning, reasoning, forming their own judgements and confidently discussing their views, work independently and with others.'

'I can begin to see and understand how ways of teaching are constantly changing in order to improve education for children....I am starting to trust my own instinct when it comes to learning to be a teacher.'

The final comment suggested a nascent sense of 'strategic alertness' to classroom learning opportunities alluded to in Figure 1.

'As a learner I have developed

questioning and thinking skills and it is these skills which I can use as an intending teacher. I hope that I can use these skills to provide children with the opportunities to enjoy and develop their learning and knowledge in history.'

'I am more confident in what I will be teaching children and how to approach it better. I have come to appreciate that, for children, history is a hard subject to understand and that it will be challenging for them.'

There were other gains. Students were also asked whether there were cognitive skills and ways of learning and teaching, derived from their academic course in history, that were transferable to other curriculum areas of their ITT programme. Almost 40% of all responses made explicit reference to the transfer of cognitive skills and specifically to questioning skills, hypothesis building, developing argumentation and the application of evidence, all of which are skills that are vital to developing a research-based approach to the wider ITT and undergraduate curriculum. Academic study, in this case delivered through learning technology, is highly relevant to an ITT curriculum that looks beyond the limited horizons of 'meeting the standards'. It can be instrumental in re-orienting the professional conceptions and values of intending teachers.

Biography

Dr Graham Rogers is a Reader in Educational Development, Principal Lecturer in History and History Subject Study Co-ordinator in the Faculty of Education at Edge Hill University. He has been a recent national award winner for Teaching History in Higher Education presented by the History Subject Centre (HEA). He has a particular research interest in the pedagogy of e-learning and has experience of developing a series of online courses in the fields of history, primary education and professional support and training.

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Footnote:

1. SCOP – The Standard Conference of Principals, available at www.scop.ac.uk

4. Why we value our virtual learning environment.

Kerry Jordan-Daus: Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU).

Summary

Sometimes we do things because someone tells us we have to! ICT might be gimmicky and a bolt on rather than a tool to achieve a pedagogical philosophy. This is a story of how virtual learning is becoming an integral part of our teaching and learning environment; an environment that is dynamic, critical, supportive and collaborative.

Keywords

VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) / Secondary History PGCE / blended learning / formative assessment / formative assessment

Introduction

We don't travel far in reflective practice: just make a great deal more sense of where we are. (Bolton, 2001)

Draft Paper updated May 15th 2006 (no part of this paper is to be quoted without consulting the author)

This paper aims to explore the practice of blended learning deployed on the History PGCE course that I lead. It has been suggested that blended learning means different things to different people (Driscoll, 2003), for the purposes of this paper it is taken to mean the practice of combining face-to-face teaching with computer mediated or e-learning.¹

The initial development of our virtual learning environment (VLE) was a means by which some structural, teaching and professional learning challenges were tackled. However, this has not been achieved simply by having the technology. Steve Woolgar (2000) in *Defining the Digital Divide* reminds us that 'access does not guarantee use' and 'use does not require access'.

For the purposes of this conference paper, I have reflected on how we went about developing our VLE with the aim of exploring how it has had added any value to the History PGCE course. This paper is a narrative of the last four and half years. It is apparent that, although at first practice was not underpinned by any robust theory, increasingly I became interested in 'what else' I might be able to do with e-learning, and thus, moved out of a practitioner experimental mode, into an action research mode (McNiff, 1991, Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995). As I became more interested in the potential of the VLE, the more I sought out opportunities to challenge my practice. Data, including trainee course evaluations, focus group discussions, VLE postings and statistics of engagement with the VLE during the course² have been used to inform and support the ongoing analysis. I have also

participated in Faculty and cross Faculty discussion groups on e-learning and development in VLEs. I have also met and shared practice with colleagues from two other HEIs.

More recently I became interested in how to build the capacity for the VLE to become much more than a vehicle to disseminate information and transfer knowledge but also a vehicle to build a community of practice and thus construct knowledge:

Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. (Wenger, 1998)

Fundamentally this paper represents some of the evidence of the critical approach I have sought to adopt. 'We need to ask many questions about the relative costs and benefits of computer technology and get answers before blindly adopting it,' says Griggs (1999), 'At present, we don't have those answers. Sadly, we don't seem to be asking many questions'.

Early Needs

The decision to explore the opportunities that might be afforded by a virtual learning environment came shortly after I joined Canterbury Christ Church University in 2001. I wondered if a VLE might help with some of the challenges I faced leading a cohort of 52 history trainees who were spread over a large geographical area. The organisation of our PGCE meant that after an initial block of face-to-face teaching, the trainees are in their placement school for two ten week school placements, with a further two weeks of teaching separating the first and second school placements. I experienced a fairly common phenomenon of trainees seeing University and school experience as separate entities (Furlong, 1996). This issue was highlighted in my external examiner report in 2002. Apart from the lesson observation, once the trainees had gone into school, I felt a sense of detachment from their learning. Trainees' course

evaluations reported a sense of detachment or even isolation whilst on their school placement. Additionally, I had little evidence of trainees engaging with subject sessions beyond our face-to-face session. Were they using ideas we had examined in their own teaching? I had limited evidence beyond the oral contributions made by some of the trainees that reading was actually being done and reflected upon. Whilst these issues were not unique and have been expressed by others, it seemed that the technology may offer some solutions.

Blending the Learning

The VLE sits alongside what might be described as more traditional forms of learning and teaching, the seminar, field work, tutorial and occasional lecture. In constructing the course we make deliberate choices about what we want the trainees to learn and how they will learn and how the type of learning activity works to bring about planned learning outcomes. The VLE is one of many learning options we select from in constructing our subject course.

In recruiting for the course, applicants at the interview stage have been asked to make a commitment to all the different modes of learning that will be deployed. Within the literature outlining the course, our commitment to e-learning is highlighted:

It is **vitaly important** that there are regular, effective and efficient communications at all times throughout the year. This is a particular issue during those weeks in the course when you are on 'block' experience and there are no formal scheduled opportunities to meet regularly with the subject tutor. To help overcome this period of no face-to-face contact, all student teachers are required to participate in online discussion. This virtual learning environment is an opportunity to discuss issues as they arise in school and seek the ongoing support of tutors, mentors and fellow student teachers.

(History PGCE subject guidance 2005-6)

To this end we are trying to embed e-learning as an integrated and integral part of the total learning experience; not something to opt into, not some 'hype'. Of course, it would be naïve and foolhardy to believe that all learning experiences engage all learners.

Analysis of engagement with the VLE reveal history PGCE trainees who are active contributors and active 'lurkers' (look, but rarely contribute) and even some non-

participants. We are reminded that lurking is acceptable; 'some people learn by listening to others so do not assume learning is not taking place' (Berge, 1995). Although the way we have constructed learning activities, complete abstinence is not possible. We have included within our assessment framework evidence of engaging with the VLE. As we continue on this e-journey, the extent to which we are able to achieve a greater number of the learners in an active engagement with the VLE could become our research and development focus.

It has been suggested that blended learning 'allows organisations to gradually move learners from traditional classrooms to e-learning in small steps making change easier to accept' (Driscoll, 2003). Implicit in this statement is some kind of inevitability that e-learning is a natural way forward and will replace the traditional classrooms. This kind of assumption is dangerous, and can perhaps serve to distance some from entertaining an e-option, fearing that it will be the slippery slope. One of the key summary points of the ESRC's (Economic and Social Research Council) Virtual Society Programme is that 'new technologies tend to supplement rather than substitute existing practices'. I would like to suggest that blended learning might be considered the end in itself, and that it has a potential to offer a richer experience than a solely distance learning model or indeed a solely face-to-face learning model. I would be arguing against any idea that suggested e-learning could replace the other learning opportunities within our course. In fact, as I will go on to argue, different forms of learning support each other and the combination and blending of the learning is that which adds the value.

Staff Development

Prior to joining Higher Education, I had worked in a school and been recently subjected to some quite tedious compulsory New Opportunity Funded ICT Training. I had a fair degree of scepticism towards ICT. I certainly did not accept technology as inevitable, but needed to see that it would indeed add value to learning and teaching. As part of my induction into Higher Education, I met with the Faculty Learning Technologist (FLT)³, who introduced me to a number of technologies, including a virtual learning environment. I was immediately keen to explore how the VLE could be used, and set up some basic discussion forums.

We have continued to work closely with the FLT, and I have been offered a great deal of staff-development support, encouragement and critical friendship in the development of my VLE. The relationship has changed from novice/expert to that of co-constructors. Salmon (2003a) has highlighted the importance of staff development meeting 'the peculiarities and requirements of the online environment itself'. She also highlights the distinctive skill set that lecturers supporting e-learning

require, going as far to say that the skills are distinctive from those that teachers have in conventional settings. Within my own institution, staff development conversations critiquing this assertion are at a very early stage. The most recent staff development seminars I have attended operated at the 'what' can we do in the sense of doing more with the technology. I am tentatively suggesting that staff development should change our focus to the 'how'.

My own institution had made a significant investment into the VLE and clearly there is an expectation that lecturers will now use this. Clegg et al. (2003) argue that this is not atypical. The use of computers, technology and e-learning has been a mainstay of government education policy for a number of years and the commitment to technologies can be found in a range of government papers (Blunkett, 2000).

However, Clegg et al. (2003) argue that what has been missing is the debate as to how VLEs could be used 'effectively to support teaching and learning', and they continue by suggesting that 'there is little evidence of educational research underpinning the high expectations created by their (VLE) marketing' (Clegg et al., 2003). Oliver and Conole (2003) also question the many claims that have been made about 'the efficacy and the efficiency of the use of computers to support learning and teaching' and 'the extent to which such claims are rhetorical or are "evidence-based" remains open to question'.

What have we done with the History VLE?

A critical first question in the development of the VLE was not what could the VLE do for me, but what could I do with it (Salmon 2003a).

In designing my VLE I used Salmon's (2003) Five Step Model. I systematically designed tasks and activities that would provide the structured and scaffolded learning experiences to support the trainees' professional learning whilst making 'effective' use of the VLE. Informed and guided by Salmon's own research, tasks and activities were accordingly developed. However, in constructing the 'whole' programme of learning on the PGCE one takes into account models of learning to teach. I feel able to demonstrate that as 'Academics (we) have been able to draw upon their own pedagogic repertoires, practical wisdom and relative control of the curriculum to shape the way in which innovation is implemented' (Clegg et al., 2003). Adding a blend of e-learning to the already 'complex, bewildering and sometimes painful task' of learning to teach (Maynard and Furlong, 1993) must be sensitively managed. The VLE may be perceived by some as adding yet another challenge rather than being a support to learning.

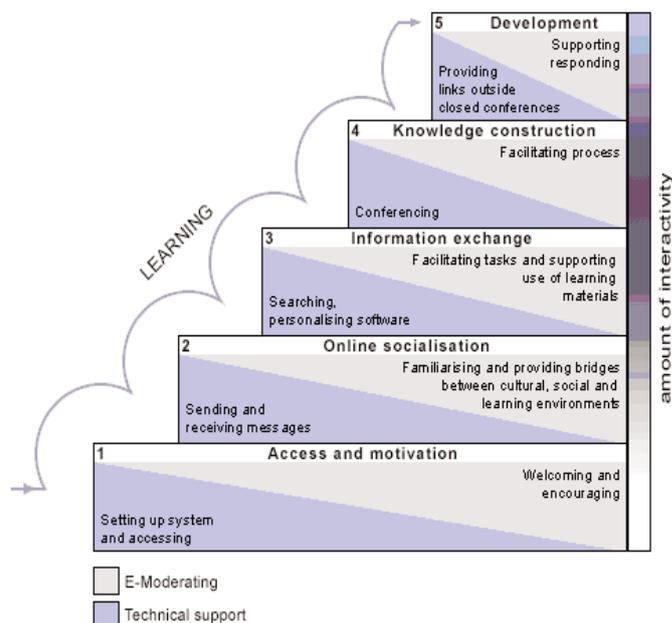


Figure 1
Salmon's Five Step Model (2003).

'Learners are not always equipped with the necessary skills to succeed in this new type of learning environment' (McPherson and Nunes, 2003). Salmon's Five Step Model (2003) may provide a structure as to how to manage this within Steps 1 to 3. Key to the VLE adding value is the extent to which the trainees have Networked Information and Communication Literacy Skills (NICLS) (Nunes et al., 2000). NICLS include technical skills and the higher order learning competencies, such as constructivist learning, supportive and mediated learning, reflective analysis and metacognition. During the PGCE we support our trainees in the development of such learning competencies, regardless of whether we deploy an e-learning option. These learning skills are not only essential for the success of a VLE but also form a mainstay of the face-to-face learning on the PGCE (McPherson and Nunes, 2003).

Below I have simply listed how the VLE is utilised on our course. This list merely serves to give the overall picture of the different ways we have chosen to use the medium. I will go on to examine in depth the rationale behind some of the usages, attempting to explore the how e-learning has indeed added value to our PGCE.

Illustrations of how the VLE has been developed

- ♦ Course Materials (Salmon: - Step 1 and 3)
The VLE is a depository for all course documents, course materials, session plans and supporting papers. Trainees thus have unlimited access to all documents. Whilst not a particularly exciting task, organising these documents into clearly defined and thus more easily accessible folders is important.⁴ We

commit to posting all our subject session plans in advance of the session (at least 48 hours). Trainees thus need to, and do, access the plan of the session, and complete the necessary tasks in preparation for the learning activities. This in itself has contributed much more to the trainees' active engagement with learning in the session.

- ◆ Resources Files (Salmon: - Step 1 and 3)
Tutor generated folders to store materials that may provide useful material for trainees, for example, websites and evaluations, subject knowledge development materials etc.
- ◆ Trainee School Placement Information (Salmon: - Step 3)
There is an area for all school placement information. It is the trainee's responsibility to upload timetable, school contact/mentor details etc. This has been a really useful practical 'time-saving' use of our VLE. Although clearly not a high level activity, given that surveys show that workload and the use of time worries most about e-learning (Cravener, 1999). We have also included here all mentor newsletters.
- ◆ Getting to Know Each Other (Salmon: - Step 2 and 3)
As part of our early sessions on examining the nature of history learning and an induction into Blackboard, trainees post their own autobiography of history learning. Within this forum trainees generate their own threads, often beginning with a social element.
- ◆ Resource Exchange (and evaluation) (Salmon: - Step 1, 3, 4 and 5)
Trainees voluntarily share teaching and learning resources that they have developed and used whilst on school placement. We have achieved some resources from previous cohorts. Trainees are also encouraged to upload their work as a result of tutor observation of practice. (See below for a more detailed examination of how this e-activity adds values to our history PGCE)
- ◆ General Support Discussion Forum (Salmon: - Step 1-5)
A forum has been set up where trainees offer each other mutual support; this is very popular with over 600 posts, including every trainee on the course.
- ◆ Web Quest Activities⁵ (Salmon: - Step 3, 4 and 5)
Specific tutor set tasks, for example, examination of National Strategy, have been developed using web quests.
- ◆ Reading Groups (Salmon: - Step 3-5)
Discussion groups leading online reflections on key readings, or computer mediated communication tasks have been set. Readings are all linked to the substantive theme of the face-to-face teaching sessions. (See below for a more detailed examination of how this e-activity adds values to our history PGCE)

- ◆ Assignments and Subject Tasks (Salmon:- Step 3, 4 and 5)
Assignment plans are submitted electronically and feedback is provided through the VLE. Some specific subject tasks are submitted on the VLE and again formative assessed.
- ◆ Evaluations (Salmon: - Steps 1 and 3)
Trainees complete all course evaluations through the VLE. The system allows for anonymous evaluations to be completed.

How has the VLE added value to the PGCE History Course?

One of very early face-to-face teaching sessions introduces the trainees to the VLE, and we practice simple postings and computer mediated communication whilst all sitting in the same room. From peer observation (2004)⁶ I have adapted how I construct this session, focusing both on NICLS (Nunes et al., 2000) and the philosophy of learning communities (Wenger, 1998). The 'Getting to Know Each Other' forum contains a range of postings. This year there has been a group swapping book reviews. This began on 21 September 2005 and there are still people contributing to it:

'How was it for you ... I just taught my first lesson and survived.'

'Did you see the untouchables ...?'

'Behaviour Management' and 'more behaviour management.'

'Let's have a Christmas drink.'

'Not enough sleep.'

Actively encouraging the trainees to develop such a forum, I believe, contributes to breaking down some of the inhibitions and anxieties about posting on more challenging, professional learning discussion threads. Some colleagues have been anxious about such discussions (Faculty E-learning Seminar March 2006). However, even in this forum where discussions can begin quite light hearted they do move onto demonstrate higher order thinking in application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Bloom, 1956).

The evidence of learning on the VLE is only one source of assessment information in the blended learning environment on the PGCE. However, whilst in the face-to-face teaching situation some trainees may not be vocal or active participants, on the VLE there is another opportunity. This can be seen when postings begin: 'I was thinking about our discussion on teaching historical interpretation today ...' (February 2006). Salmon (2003) suggests that 'writing on screen can be playful, liberating and releasing. Emotions can often surface and be expressed which could not do so in face-to-face situations'. This has been evident in a recent thread which began with 'Have you been observed by the University tutor' to a discussion on teacher identity.

Extracts from the VLE (all names have been changed)

Simon (PGCE Trainee) - March 2006

Well hi anyone reading this, after my observation with my University Tutor ...

Last week can best be summed up by saying that at 8 pm Friday evening I collapsed on my bed and didn't surface again until midday Sunday. As I have mentioned I taught loads last week and really felt, for the first time, totally knackered. Friday night on the way home I just wanted to curl up and hibernate until June!! Do not get me wrong though I really enjoyed last week, I taught some good classes and some bad classes and hardly had a second to sit down during the school day - similarly after school had finished I didn't have a chance to sit down, but hey you cannot have your cake etc!! I feel like the week reaffirmed in a way that I can see myself doing this and enjoying it for a while yet.

The week was topped of by a year 12 lesson, the second one I had planned, being observed by Megan, it was last thing on Friday. In true observation fashion I set out to impress with my individual and dynamic teaching, so I set up a debate for them which my sole responsibility was to chair. I know daring to the extreme! Anyway, it went ok, I gave them a set of ground rules which we discussed in the morning's lesson and the two sides went away and prepared. Now, the lesson comes and it goes. It was fairly successful no disasters, everyone spoke but the evaluation that resulted left me pondering - why do I want to teach? The thing is that I need to assert myself as teacher amongst these year 12 boys. I can not be a casual leader but to me I still am in many ways a sixth former - I am still quite idealistic, my views have not yet been completely shot down, I am fairly immature and have a liking for TV babes!! Anyway, moving on is... being a teacher, a way to get yourself back into the classroom - did I become a teacher to try a re-capture my youth? I know some people enter the profession to pass on their love of a subject to kids but for me it was perhaps a way of trying to roll back the clock - to get myself a time machine that allowed me to stay a kid forever, to run from responsibility (how I ever thought I could achieve this with a one year old daughter, a house and a fiancée I will never know - you see I am naive!!) I have tackled this issue once before and indeed I have told people that if you enter teaching in attempt to go back to school then forget it - you will never be 'at school' again. Sure you will be in school but you will be 'at work' and here is the key difference. You now have a responsibility to

somebody, to a group of somebodies. Sure you can have fun at work but you cannot have 'school fun'. You have to remove yourself from the environment and be careful not to go outside the boundary. I talk not of professional issues here such as inappropriate sexual business, oh no, this is far more basic - a desire to be seen as one of the gang, to be liked to be part of the joke and not the joke. I guess this is what it all boils down to - to want to be liked

Pete (Guest onto VLE, NQT (Newly Qualified Teacher) former trainee)

What an amazing contribution Simon! For all your jolliness and slightly pained (not to read, but maybe to write!) musings - I really like this now, and would have absolutely 'gone' for it last year, become a big fan - I think you do put your finger on a lot of things.

I'll leave it to your colleagues, friends (and fans) to get back to you on the issues you raise, but ... I put my NQT 'hat' on, I'd say well done on what you've achieved. My school is being actively pushed to get students to be more independent in their learning style, but I'm still frankly too nervous to get my Year 12s to have a debate; so don't underrate your achievement there. (Excellent things from others on debates in the discussion strand; evidently a strength of this year's PGCE.)

Identity, I suppose, comes down to the heart of what you said. I still feel, as an NQT, that it's a challenge to face up to students' conceptions of what teachers actually are. Probably it's only right that they don't have full access to who we are and what we do; I, at any rate, would be a sitting duck if many of my students knew how uncertain of... myself I often feel. And that's not just a matter of classroom management, but of some of the things you were talking about; the business of negotiating a working relationship with people, who, for reasons of age (if you're not that much older than them) or temperament you don't always feel like being 'teacher' towards. (I find myself slipping very often: to share a bit of wobbly practice, though maybe good in rapport-building, my plenary in a Year 12 lesson earlier this week on women's suffrage consisted of a discussion - the students were already arguing about it from lunch -about whether cowboys were better than pirates. No, you're right, no logic to it at all.)

Really I don't know what the solution is. But I do strongly suspect, once you've got a working relationship with students, that they take a lot of cues from you. (As I did from my teachers, and I guess many have from theirs.) I say with the example of one of the girls in the class I've just mentioned who asked to see me alone at the end of a lesson last week; she burst into tears because she felt I'd picked on her by asking her, several lessons on the trot, to get on with the work and stop talking. I thought she'd always seen through the fact that I'm new and not very good at establishing authority (all the PGCE/NQT anxieties!), and couldn't possibly mind my mild attempts to impose order - but, bright and likeable girl that she is, she hadn't, and was upset about my supposedly negative attitude.

With such people I see the teacher-student relationship as a difficult - you can never quite be on the level - but still rewarding one. Depending on your temperament you can still be nearly on the level, and though you do have the responsibility (frankly tedious/unwelcome at times) of knowing that anything you say/do will often be considered with undue attention, it's an opportunity, if you do feel positively towards students, to encourage them in particular directions. And that doesn't have to mean all 'grown-up', or that you always have to model serious behaviour: as your excellent journal entry showed, it's possible to get across worthwhile points in a humorous way.

University Tutor

So this is interesting, Simon and I had a 'discussion' (!) about the necessity to fulfil course requirements by keeping a journal even though he strongly believes it doesn't work for him. The journal is a brilliant learning tool for many student... teachers and it can make headless chickens slow down and think. BUT if blackboard works for Simon in a way that the journal doesn't ...plus it has been read by so many people, therefore supporting their learning, plus people have made responses which support Richard, then we are talking about providing for different learning styles. Many people would rather teach all through Easter than share their feelings in public so we need both methods but Simon's experimental virtual journal may provide a model for an alternative that we can take to the PGCE team.

This particular illustration appears to demonstrate how the VLE has added value to the history PGCE in that we can see the trainee using ideas discussed and explored in University Subject Studies, reflecting on observation feedback but also his growing awareness of issues relating to identity (Nias, 1989). I missed an opportunity here to provide a link with the work we had been doing in Professional Studies on Teacher Identity. From this contribution we are able to enrich our understandings of where the trainee is at, and support his own professional learning in a more focused and individualised way.

This year we have experimented with inviting guest participants onto the VLE, a former mentor and an NQT who was on our PGCE last year have joined the VLE as guests. Pete (NQT) was keen to remain part of our learning community and welcomed our invitation to continue within the VLE. He makes regular contributions, supporting the trainees, sharing their highs and lows, offering advice, and reflecting on his own learning. From the NQT's reply we also see the quality of his contributions in supporting the reflection on identity. Such opportunities for discussion about subject studies sessions, reflections on observations and thinking about identity may well have taken place without the VLE, they may still take place in coffee shops after school, or pubs on a Friday night. However, as tutors we can now see some of these discussions and learn about our own teaching, our observation feedback and the trainees' reflection from them. It is in this way that I would argue that the VLE is adding value to the PGCE history course.

As part of the induction into the use of the VLE we are minded to demonstrate how it can become a support for the trainees on placement. We have built up an archive of teaching resources produced by previous trainees, which can then be accessed by the new cohort. In what Maynard and Furlong (1993) have referred to as the 'survival' stage of the learning teachers' development with these quick fixes, hints and tips, we are using the VLE to provide help and support for our trainees. Thus to begin with the area could be described as fitting Salmon's (2003) Step 1 and 3, motivation and information exchange. As the e-tutor, I begin by encouraging such exchange, with sensitivity I start to suggest evaluation frameworks. E-literature has coined the term 'weaving' (Feenberg, 1989) to describe this teaching activity, education literature might use Schon (1991) 'guiding their seeing'.

Most recently we have seen the trainees using the VLE to continue on from a face-to-face session. A trainee was requested to post examples of resources from a highly creative and innovative lesson on Nazi women where pupils were required to compare modern day constructions of female identity' and then examine how the Nazis constructed their female identity. Trainees

have then replied with their own evaluations of using these resources. The one I have chosen to highlight here is significant in that it is a trainee whose practice has been described as 'safe'; with a development target to 'experiment with more group work and more pupil centred learning activities'.

Trainee's contribution to VLE

I've just taught the lesson you kindly posted here. Just thought I'd share my experience.

Overall it worked very well. I liked the idea and most of the pupils seemed to particularly enjoy the 'construction of a Nazi woman'. Some very amusing and clever pieces resulted from the group work they did.

They didn't produce quite the amount of work that I think pupils did with you (I saw a couple of examples that you showed us at the 'best practice' session) but that was mainly because I was teaching them alone for the first time and they were pushing the boundaries. However, what they did come up with was pretty good and most of them wanted to keep their 'bodies' at the end!

Although they liked looking through the glossies and cutting them out, the 'mixed' group I had was quite reluctant to talk about any possible 'construction' of a modern woman. In fact a couple of them were arguing that many Celebes had manufactured their own image and no force in particular was driving it. I was glad some pupils offered up that as they weren't offering any opinions on the subject. I really thought some of the girls would have a strong opinion on the subject, but it wasn't the case.

Thanks for posting the lesson. Really inspired idea. I will endeavour to repay by posting a lesson myself

The trainee was then encouraged to reflect on the fact that the original lesson was taught in a single sex (girls') school whereas he was teaching in a mixed school in a bid to develop his reflection and analysis. The single activity of exchanging resources has been used by both the trainee and the tutor to support learning. Through monitoring trainees' engagement within this resource exchange forum I am able to identify some trainees who are moving into stage 4 and 5 of Salmon's model or stay at stage 3, or using Maynard and Furlong's stages of development 'moving on' or stay at the 'hitting the plateau' (1993). Within one area of our VLE we operate at more than one of Salmon's stages. Both the e-learning activity and the trainees' responses enable a range of outcomes.

We have increasingly used the VLE to develop computer mediated discussion of set reading. Readings are all linked to the substantive theme of the face-to-face teaching sessions. All trainees have to participate in the e-discussions and demonstrate within their final Record of Development/portfolio submission how they have used these to support their professional learning. Many of the challenges identified by Railton and Watson (2005) on how to get students to take responsibility for their own learning on an undergraduate programme were experienced by us on our PGCE course. Many of our trainees arrive on the PGCE wanting to be told what to do and the pressure of time can make the 'quick fix' approach attractive (but we know it doesn't work!). We have been experimenting with how to use our VLE to promote active reading and embed theorising from reading in learning how to teach. Trainees are thus forced to engage with their peers in the set reading and discuss the readings on the VLE. We are still very much experimenting with this e-activity. However, participation in the reading group forums does include every trainee on the course. Of course, there is a vast difference in the nature and quality of the contributions.

Hammond K (2001) From Horror to History: teaching pupils to reflect on historical significance (October 2005)

Student 1

Just to kick things off I thought I might provide what I think is a brief summary of this article, along with a few notes. Please feel free to comment.

Key points –

Create a rigorous progressive and open enquiry question.
(As covered in the Riley reading 'Into the Key Stage 3 history garden'.)

The enquiry question should be used as the vehicle for students to move from 'knowing' to 'understanding'.
Provide a wider historical context to allow the students to engage in higher order analysis, again aiding the move from 'knowing' to 'understanding'.
The need for engagement, the washing line exercise encourages two different forms of analysis of the same data, encouraging higher order analysis through active student lead discussion.
Learning outcomes can be defined as either modular, longitudinal or background...

I especially liked the idea of placing units of work within the wider historical context. As this can often highlight the actions of cause and effect. However in trying to do this I could see it being all too easy to slip into spoon feeding the extra information and therefore not progressing beyond the 'knowing' stage.

I also rather liked the ideas of modular, longitudinal and background learning outcomes, although whilst these might be quite interesting academic distinctions I'm not sure how practical it may be to plan your schemes of work / lesson plans around these.

Student 2

I agree that it is important that students are able to understand the true horror and atrocity of the historical events that they study at school. Although sometimes appealing and exciting, I sometimes feel that the 'Horrible History' approach to teaching the past could desensitise children to the true horror of the events that they are studying. It is important that they are able to think of the people of the past as real people who had to endure these terrible events.

However, I agree with Hammond when she says that any study of events of this nature should be based upon a relevant historical enquiry question to ensure that the students understand their historical context.

Finally, I particularly liked the way that she ended the article, by saying that 'some learning outcomes can only be demonstrated by silence'. This would truly show that your students had grasped the true horror and significance of a particular event.

University Tutor

Yes, I think this is a powerful point. We may slip into valuing only things that can be measured (i.e. a piece of writing). Silence is a very appropriate response from this task and we may lose something in the process of requiring pupils to record it in their books by some superficial 'letter/diary/newspaper' type activity! Some things cannot be put into words, well, Shakespeare, Yeats and TS Elliot struggled to do this, and we are expecting Y9 in a 30 minute Homework to capture the essence of a topic such as the Holocaust?

Student 3

The main points I got from this article is to appreciate, as teachers, the difference between the pupils' knowledge, and their understanding of a particular subject. The knowledge may be there, but it is necessary to teach historical significance.

Like we discussed in subject studies, the article stresses the need to appreciate what the pupils do and don't know about particular topics, in order that we don't confuse pupils further.

I also really agree with the previous post comments on events not been isolated. Hammond's point about ensuring the pupils understand where a particular topic has come from is certainly one which I have taken away from the article and will keep in mind. The historical context must be understood in order to understand its significance, or at least that's how I read it.

I think Hammond also makes the point, about making sure you have the correct enquiry questions, which will lead to a better understanding of historical significance, and allows for the development of particular areas of interest. After working on this in subject studies and reading this article, for me there is now a need to have all my enquiry questions spot on. In fact it is becoming something I am quite anxious about. What if I get my questions wrong?

The Washing Line card activity seems pretty useful. I haven't witnessed this technique used for anything yet, but I like the idea of how one point may be of high importance on the reasons for the Holocaust, but the degree of persecution may not be so important. It raises the level of their thinking, and is an exercise which relies on their own interpretations and how this can change based on certain perspectives and wording.

Student 4

I think the point that was being made about pupils being desensitised has something to do with culture today. People and even young children are exposed to things that are shocking and powerful in everyday life. As a result they stop reacting to them as these powerful images become 'normal' to them, and Hammond proposes by showing the Holocaust in context to bring back the horror of the holocaust back to the pupils.

Hammond mentions that pupils will often know the stories of Anne Frank and Oscar Schindler - they can see tiny snapshots, but not until they can see the bigger picture can they comprehend just what these stories are a part of, and see the full horror. This really resonated with me. I read Anne Frank when I was seven or eight, but I am only just now coming to really comprehend the full horror of what occurred. It is one thing to see the small pieces of the whole, it is quite another to understand exactly what it means.

I think what Hammond was trying to say was that we need to put the Holocaust in the context of the persecution the Jews had experienced before and also the context of the war, so they can understand how it was different from persecution before and in places fuelled or assisted by the war situation.

Student 5

Having read the Hammond article, I too was interested in the desensitising element of the thought process. I think this is more than video games and film images although this obviously plays a crucial role. I read an article a while ago on the importance of the 'spectacle' in the creation of Americans' responses to 9/11. The value of the 'spectacle' (i.e. that the whole horrifying event was played out repeatedly on TV showing the very moments where people can witness the moment of death) at first shocked everyone so much that it had an entrancing quality for many. The trouble with such a phenomenon is that it gets overcooked and soon we become weary of watching it. It's rather like an amazing song which despite its inherent brilliance and impact becomes tiresome and limp if overplayed no matter how great it may be.

Follow that up with repeated images of the horrors of war in Afghanistan and Iraq etc and all of a...

sudden we have become used to seeing such human tragedies played out nightly on TV. Imagine the impact these images have on an 11 year old who has been used nearly all their lives to seeing such things. The impact of the 'spectacle' is clearly diminished (as is the importance of human tragedy).

I agree entirely with Hammond when she says that basing an enquiry question on a strong sense of historical significance does allow a lot of different skills and thought-processes to be generated. I particularly like the idea that children will themselves treat the subject matter with increased maturity if they can contextualise events in the right manner. Historical significance is, for me, a particularly interesting approach. I feel it provides a varied set of activities and methods to deliver both the skills and content of history. I firmly believe that content without skills is seriously limiting. If someone knows that water boils at 100 degrees then they are knowledgeable. If they know how or why, then they have intelligence and are able to better apply that knowledge/intelligence to other scenarios. If we can teach children always with the thought in the back of our minds that we are trying to develop such skills then we will be better teachers for it. Well I hope so!!

Student 6

I tried the technique of 'desensitizing' pupils in my lesson on Tuesday. The subject of the lesson was Stalemate and an introduction to life in the trenches. I used a power point presentation I found in the schools resource folder (I have attached it to the 'useful resources' section). I used various pictures of trench life and explained, drew questions, answers etc... For the subject of Trench foot, I used a graphic picture of the effects - a black foot with toes missing and hanging off. The picture was extremely effective and captured all the students. This was a year 9 lower set with 50% students SEN (Special Educational Needs). However, the next picture backfired - it was meant to be an equally powerful picture - a 1918 picture of eight Somme survivors all in wheelchairs, all legs amputated. The class's regular teacher had used it with other year 9 classes and assured it would work well. Yet the students proceeded to laugh, which in hindsight does not really surprise me.

This example illustrates one of the first attempts at computer mediated communication set around a key reading. The trainees at this stage had little school experience, having completed less than ten serial days of practice, two days per week in school. Whilst the first postings simply provide a synopsis of some points raised in the reading, trainees then proceed to extrapolate issues that have resonance with their own early experiences. The trainees are beginning to make links between subject sessions, school experience and literature. The forum has enabled me to see where trainees are making such links and to supplement with my own comments and questions. Teaching does not stop when the University session has finished. Such evidence of learning has enabled me to be more aware of where a learning teacher might be in their professional practice. It is another source of data to inform the support I can give to the learner. I feel that this is a valuable enhancement to our PGCE course. Whilst it is reassuring to actually see reading happening (i.e. it may happen without the VLE), it enables teaching to continue outside the formal face-to-face session, facilitated by both the tutor and peers.

Conclusions

'Reflective practice is the focusing upon detailed stories of practice and life' (Bolton, 2001). Technology is not a simple answer to complex issues. Within my own PGCE course it has been the driver of some key developments. It is difficult to gauge the real extent that the VLE has added value beyond my own perceptions. For some trainees it is yet another burden, ongoing issues of access are cited (Course evaluation 2004-5) as a major factor explaining individuals' lack of engagement. For others the VLE is missed when the trainee leaves the course. Probed further, what were missed were the ideas, the support, always having someone to talk to (NQT interview April 2006).

Clegg et al. (2003) have identified three types of responses to issues around technology, uncritical acceptance, mediation and critical pedagogy. As part of the process of constructing this paper, I audited our own action in relation to the types they have identified. Their first type of 'uncritical acceptance' or the techno fix does not seem to fit with the picture I have of my own practice. It was not the case that we used the VLE because it was there, or we were told to. Its initial adoption as a possible part of our repertoire of teaching and learning tools was to attempt to meet real needs which had not been successfully met through the deployment of more traditional methods. 'E' may not be best (Clegg, 2003), but I was willing to give it a try.

Salmon's 5 Step Model (2003) provided a theoretical basis from which to begin the development of the VLE. However, I have found that the metaphor of 'step'

perhaps does not quite capture the nature of a learner's development within an e learning task (McPherson and Nunes, 2003). Learning and thinking cannot be neatly sequenced and postings within one forum can cut across all 5 Stages. However, as a tool to help with developing the VLE it proved very powerful. Within a PGCE Programme, the 5 Step Model has to be integrated alongside models of how trainees learn to teach. We perhaps need to develop an e-learning pedagogy within learning to teach pedagogy. As I continue the examination of e-learning, I am minded not to add to what we have already achieved, that is try and do more, but focus on developing that which already exists. I hope that this will then help me to move into the critical pedagogy zone (Clegg, 2003).

Biography

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Footnotes

1. Another term used to describe the practice of combining face-to-face and e-learning is a hybrid course. 'Hybridity is the order of the day, as teachers combine the distributed teaching and learning of distance education with the comfortable interaction of the classroom in an effort to achieve a synthesis of the two', Peter Sands, *University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Teaching with Technology Today*, Vol 8, No 6, March 2002
2. The VLE generates a set of statistics based upon each trainee's accessing of the VLE, and the different 'areas' they visit. We have looked at visits and contrasted with postings to identify some trainees who are frequent visitors but less active posters/contributors.
3. The role of the Faculty Learning Technologist is specifically support academics in developing their use of ICT and e learning, as opposed to ICT technical support.
4. Being able to find what you need, navigate the site and generally get a friendly feel from the VLE, is, I would suggest part of the Step 1 of the Salmon model.
5. The web quest development came about as a colleague new to teaching on the history PGCE course began to critically engage with VLE developments. Her research and development work on web quests formed part of a Masters' assignment
6. In September 2004 the Faculty Learning Technologist observed my teaching of this induction to the VLE face-to-face teaching session.

5. VLEs: the new Everest, do we just use them because they are there?

Ian Phillips: Edge Hill University.

Summary

A review of developing practice and a consideration of how VLEs might be used to support the professional development of beginning history teachers.

Keywords

VLEs (Virtual Learning Environments)/ PGCE/ Secondary Teacher Education Programmes

Introduction

WebCT has been used to support beginning teachers on the history PGCE course at Edge Hill since 2000-2001. The decision to become involved with WebCT reflected the course leader's involvement and (alleged) expertise with ICT. A standard course shell existed and during this first academic year WebCT was used largely to support and communicate with trainees whilst they were on school placements. The use of WebCT evolved over successive academic years. The History PGCE WebCT area was used to support a number of linked web pages which became an integral part of teaching and learning resources. Early web pages were used to demonstrate good observed lessons and thereby share good practice with the cohort. By setting up lesson plans and resources as scanned images on a web page, rather than simply attaching electronic copies of documents, it was possible to add a tutor's commentary using hyperlinked hot spots. This technique was also used to help beginning teachers understand issues related to the assessment of pupils' written work. In the past 3 years the History PGCE WebCT area has become a more coherent and a more purposeful environment providing access to a wide range of resources to support learning. It is a carefully structured environment tailored to the developing professional needs of beginning history teachers.

Successive evaluations suggest that WebCT is viewed as an indispensable element of their professional development, equally importantly it helps beginning teachers to become a more cohesive and self supporting group. Strategically WebCT is recognised by as a way of supporting beginning teachers across the secondary PGCE programme and during the validation of new courses there is an assumption that the 'trainee learning experience' will be supported by WebCT. From a personal perspective the focus on WebCT was more concerned with the mechanics and the technology rather than the developing pedagogy of e-learning.

Despite this, Ofsted appeared to be impressed. In the most recent short inspection reports for the academic year 2004 - 2005 Ofsted described WebCT as 'a password-protected interactive web site (which) provides

a means for communicating and disseminating good practice. It is used very successfully by trainees in subject areas where they are encouraged or expected to use it to access learning resources and tasks'. The history specific comment revealed more about the inspectors lack of understanding when it came to VLEs and e-learning: 'in history, the college web site provides exemplar lesson planning and learning objectives'¹. While the Ofsted comments are complimentary and appear to be describing good practice, they reveal a level of ignorance about VLEs and the pedagogy of e-learning. When these Ofsted views are considered alongside strategic expectations of VLEs it is clear that as a PGCE tutor it would be useful both to identify key issues which are particular to one year teacher education courses and at the same time attempt to outline an appropriate or distinctive pedagogy of e-learning for a secondary PGCE course.

- ♦ Do the structure, the nature and the expectations of a Secondary PGCE programme challenge existing models of e-learning?
- ♦ Is it possible to define a distinctive or appropriate e-learning model for a Secondary PGCE programme?
- ♦ Can we take VLEs beyond discussion forums and engage with new technologies?
- ♦ Where and how might a VLE most effectively support the learning and professional development of beginning teachers?

What makes the Secondary PGCE Programme Distinctive?

E-learning environments supported by VLEs such as Blackboard or WebCT are based on traditional academic patterns and timetables. They are usually designed to replace a traditional academic framework of seminars and lectures delivered across the equally traditional pattern of an academic year. Whilst students have more control over the pace of their e-learning and the quality of their learning can be significantly different, traditional ideas of progression still prevail. Students' learning might be described as cumulative; by the end of the term or semester, or on completion of the module, learning outcomes will, in theory, have been achieved. The one

year PGCE course, in contrast, is different. Beginning teachers spend less time based in their Higher Education Institution; their learning takes place in a number of different locations and a variety of different contexts. They also have to be able to demonstrate that they can meet a range of diverse criteria; academic, professional and vocational, in order to become subject teachers in a secondary school (Phillips, 2002:6-11). Some elements of the education or training might be more familiar. They are graduates in a defined subject, by default they (should) have an understanding of the particular knowledge and the conceptual constructs of their discipline.

Learning outcomes on completion of the PGCE course are also significantly diverse. Beginning teachers must satisfy the technical and professional requirements of the Q_tT Standards (Qualifying to Teach, TTA, 2002) but teacher educators would also claim that a more significant 'end product' is an NQT who is analytical, critical and reflective. It is in this aspect of teacher education that claims are made for the potential of VLEs. It is a question of where and how VLEs can develop or contribute to critical reflective engagement.

The uniqueness of a PGCE course has meant that commonly accepted models of e-learning are not appropriate or difficult to apply - in particular the 5 Stage model suggested by Salmon (2003). This model where learning progresses from access and motivation through a process of online socialisation to the construction and development of new knowledge, is one that might be appropriate to more conventional academic courses but does not sit easily with the pattern of the PGCE year. Most PGCE courses would not see themselves as an entirely e-learning course anyway. The traditional face-to-face sessions are an essential and probably highly effective way of developing the learning of beginning teachers. What we are concerned with is developing an appreciation of how and where e-learning can be most effective. From Figure 1 it can be seen that even opportunities to establish a blended course are limited. Effectively a PGCE course defies most accepted criteria for e-learning and it is for this reason that perhaps PGCE tutors need to consider developing a clear rationale for the effective use of a VLE.

The Salmon model is gradual and infers that learning takes place in a clearly defined series of incremental stages. The competing series of demands and the inflexible time frame mean that the PGCE course is far more pressured. In a more conventional e-learning environment students might be able to control the pace of their own learning but beginning teachers embarking on a PGCE course have a series of rapidly increasing incremental demands made of them. This pressurised environment has also been identified by Lee (2005) and

describes how Stages 1 and 2 - Access and Motivation and On Line Socialisation effectively take place in one face-to-face session in the university at the start of the course. It is probably a feature of the PGCE year with which most tutors can identify. The effectiveness of 'traditional' e-learning activities is also affected by the organisation of teaching activities. (See figure 1). In most PGCE courses taught sessions are front loaded and result in an intense period of teaching and learning in the autumn term. These sessions are variously described as subject application or curriculum development and introduce beginning teachers to a variety of subject specific pedagogical issues. At the same time they are beginning to make sense of the secondary school environment through a weekly two or three day placement. Their learning curve at this stage is steep and new knowledge and new experiences have to be assimilated rapidly. The opportunities for the gradual or developmental approach outlined by Salmon are impractical. The PGCE tutor has, crudely, to balance content coverage with fostering a critical, reflective perspective. VLEs can have a significant part to play largely by extending the time and place where critical reflection can be facilitated. The virtual element of the VLE has implications for the PGCE tutor, traditional academic frameworks make allowances according to how, where and when online courses are delivered. VLEs in a PGCE setting are frequently supplementary and operate successfully because of the professional commitment of tutors - in such a setting they might be more correctly described as Virtuous Learning Environments.

The Salmon model is valuable in raising an awareness of preconditions for effective e-learning; i.e. in a supportive community where common interests and shared experiences and expectations prevail. It also presupposes an element of predictability and regularity. The model also assumes that learning is progressive making a series of incremental demands on the e-learners. For reasons outlined earlier some of these assumptions do not reflect the PGCE experience but there are aspects of a PGCE year and PGCE cohort which are more positive. They have a common purpose and common interests, group socialisation and group identity are quickly established through intensive face-to-face sessions. More significantly the PGCE cohort has more in common than shared interests and expectations; they have their graduate-ness, an understanding of the knowledge and concepts of an academic discipline. Successful use of a VLE to develop the critical and reflective understanding of beginning teachers can often be facilitated through a deliberate focus on the skills and conceptual constructs which are (or should be) an integral element of the professional craft knowledge which they possess as history, or geography or English graduates.

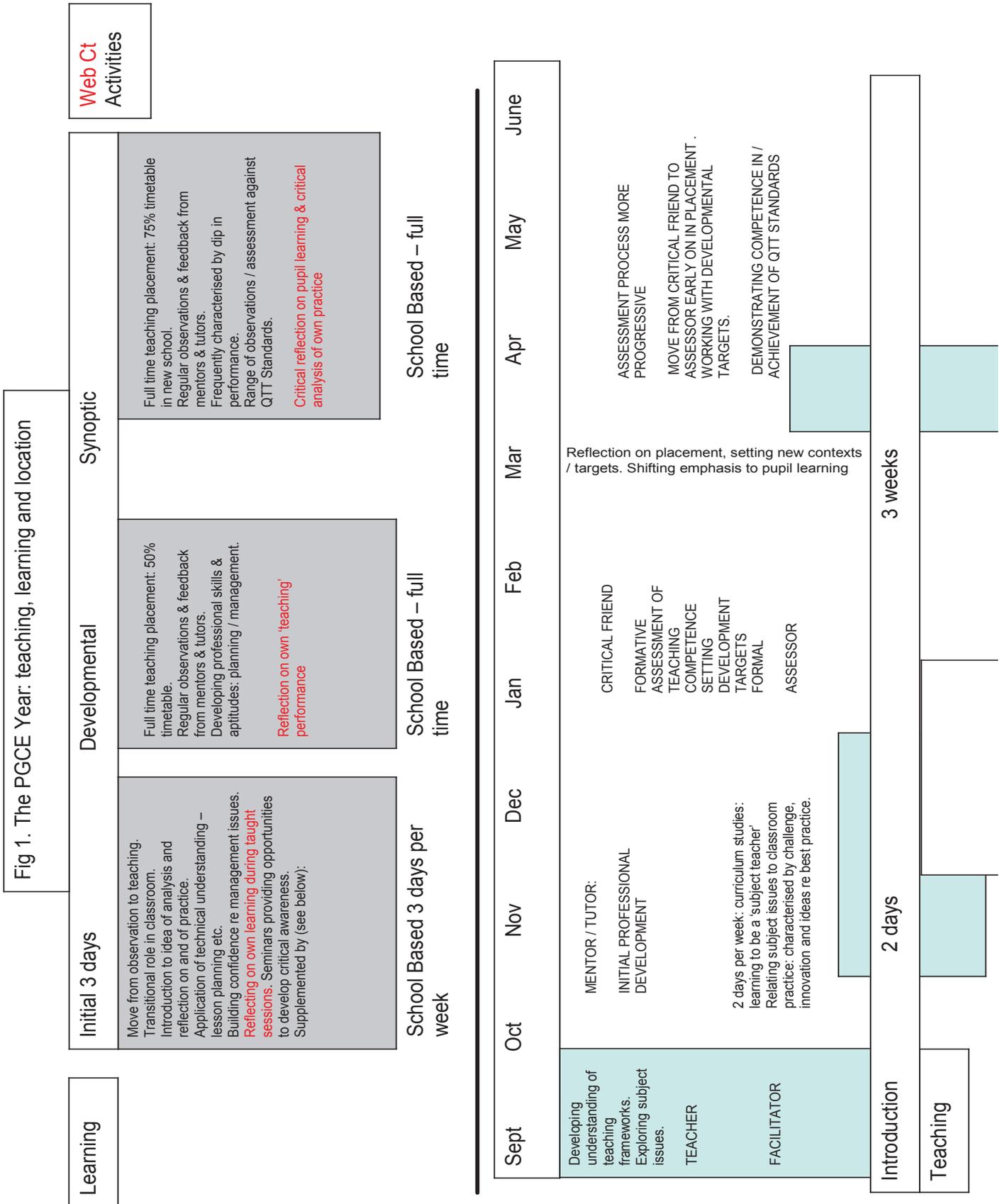


Fig 1. The PGCE Year: teaching, learning and location

An E-Learning Model for a Secondary PGCE Programme

Beginning teachers might arrive on PGCE courses from very different backgrounds but since the late 1990s the QAA has identified a series of Graduate Benchmark Statements for different subject areas². There is therefore a theoretical element of commonality in terms of their gradueness and this raises wider issues relating to the recognition of beginning teachers' prior knowledge and experience. They may be beginners in terms of developing a professional craft knowledge of the classroom but they are not inexperienced as learners in an academic discipline. It may be that the teacher education community does not take sufficient account of their experience of learning. Their degrees become entry certificates for a PGCE course and not necessarily the starting point for developing a new kind of professional knowledge. The results of research presented at the History Subject Centre Conference in April 2006³ suggests that beginning history teachers can demonstrate a sophisticated level of critical, analytical and reflective thinking from an early point in their course. This is a product (or a demonstration) of their gradueness and is possible because the focus of their early online discussions are grounded in an exploration of history and what it means to be a history graduate (see figure 2 for analysis of learning and VLE engagement). These discussions were structured to help them make the move from the familiar world of the history learner into the new world of the subject teacher. In terms of the Salmon model it is probably reasonable to suggest that it is possible for subject graduates to demonstrate the ability to operate at Stage 4 where they were participating in discussion forums and conferences and beginning to construct new knowledge. There was no deliberate intention to move the group of beginning history teachers through a process or to measure their performance against a model but what emerged was a cohesive learning community where the level of reflection and analysis during online discussion in the first month of the course was of a high calibre.

The quality of discussion over the autumn term, however, was not uniform and reflected the 'mixed ability' nature of the group and the way that this group of beginning teachers responded to the progressive series of demands which were made on them as the course progressed. An analysis of contributions made in discussion forums over this period showed that the early reflective and analytical contributions became less frequent. Two types of discussion ran parallel. One asked for reflections on taught curriculum sessions and used the discussion forum as an extended plenary. The second forum related to weekly classroom observation tasks; the aim was to try and develop the group's abilities as informed and analytical observers of the history classroom. Whilst some individual contributions

were reflective and analytical, the level of interaction was limited. This activity in the VLE reflects the findings of Sackville and Sherratt (2006) who have attempted to categorise learner interaction in a VLE. Their analysis of learners' interactions takes place on a very different type of course where responses can be developed or encouraged over a significant period of weeks. Again the conclusions appear to suggest that the nature of the PGCE programme has a direct influence on how beginning teachers work and interact with others in a VLE. Postings are made because they are viewed as a course requirement. By posting they fulfil an obligation or expectation, and it is viewed simply as yet another task. The time frame in which they operate also militates against reflective interaction; observations made one week are less relevant as the following week's demands and expectations have to be addressed.

It is possible to see how a VLE can contribute to the delivery of a secondary PGCE course and to enhancing learning opportunities but there is a tension between this reflective and analytical approach which a VLE can foster and the more functional pressures of the one year PGCE programme. Beginning teachers are required to perform a range of activities in placement schools and in HEIs and to meet a series of competing academic and professional deadlines. Under these circumstances the available evidence would suggest that beginning teachers are able to demonstrate a critical, reflective and analytical capacity from early on in their PGCE course. They are more able to develop or apply these qualities when working within the familiar realm of their professional graduate craft knowledge. Eventually they are also able to apply these same critical and reflective approaches to their practice in the classroom once they have developed a certain level of confidence or experience. The extent to which VLEs contribute to this process is often down to pragmatism and utility, the competing demands of lesson and resource preparation, lesson evaluation, marking and assessment all place significant time pressures on beginning teachers. They are balancing competing requirements and it is probably an issue, either for PGCE programmes, or individual PGCE subjects to decide when, where and how VLEs can make a significant contribution to enhancing the professional development of beginning teachers in a way that is not contrived or in a way that they themselves feel is beneficial.

Most beginning teachers who use VLEs believe that they are highly beneficial and do support their professional development. Discussion forums provide formal and informal support networks and there is an identifiable pattern of use over the course of the PGCE year (see figure 2). In this respect VLEs are invaluable and work by Messer (2006) and Jordan-Daus (2006) show how self supporting learning communities develop and how

Fig 2 Web Ct: Identifying changing patterns of use

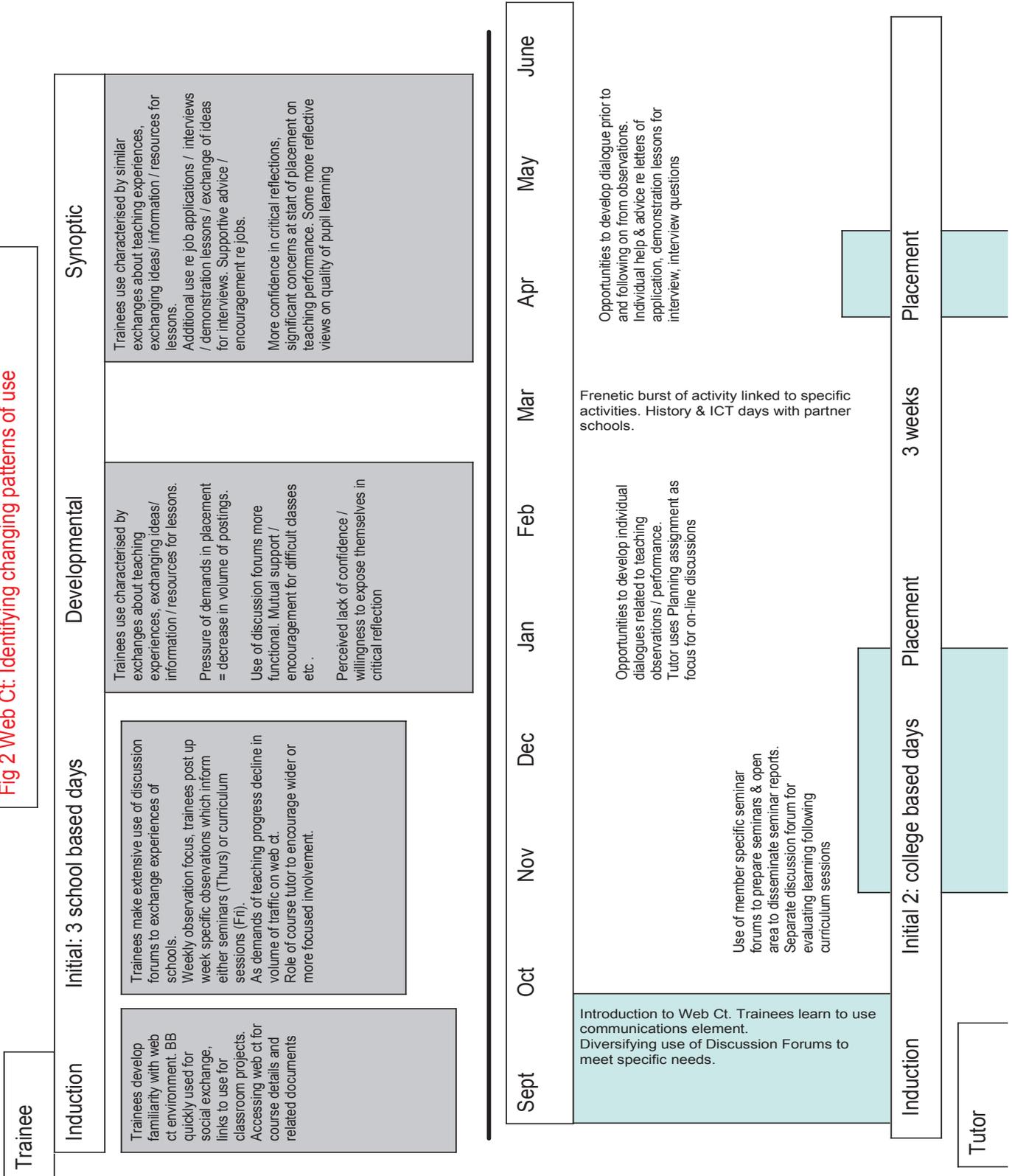


Fig 2 Web Ct: Identifying changing patterns of use

they provide invaluable professional support.

Using New Technologies

This final section briefly focuses on the role and relationship between the teacher and the technology. There is clearly an expectation that PGCE tutors use communications technology in their teaching; it exemplifies good practice and reinforces the message to beginning teachers that the key issue is how technology enhances teaching and improves learning. There are also strategic expectations (or assumptions) that learning technology is demonstrably a 'good thing' but this can lead to an uncritical acceptance and use of VLEs. The second issue relates to the delicate balance between 'comfortable' and challenging technologies - those that teachers might consider too new or too complex. These technical issues do have an impact on the way that VLEs are used. Simply uploading course content tends to encourage a 'shovelware' mentality and the VLE becomes a repository for word documents and PowerPoint presentations. A VLE has the potential to be far more than a series of discussion forums and PGCE tutors may need to consider how they can work with learning technologists to extend the potential of VLEs. The model suggested by Harding (2006) has a degree of merit where the successful development of a VLE represents a partnership between the subject pedagogy and appropriate technology with the subject pedagogy playing the most significant role. Again it is a matter of balancing different factors; identifying where e-learning would be beneficial and appropriate and contrasting this with the different pressures already identified in the pattern of teaching and learning in the PGCE year.

Teachers in Secondary ITE should have the confidence to stretch the boundaries; it might be that greater consideration needs to be given to what is possible in a VLE. With support from learning technologists it should be possible to get more out of a VLE; it is not a matter of using new technologies simply because they are there, evidence of work with discussion forums demonstrates that teaching and learning issues will probably inform developments. The contrast with the school sector is instructive. On first glance it might appear that Secondary ITE is conservative with respect to the hard technologies which are employed to enhance teaching and learning. Schools appear to be enthusiasts for the new technologies and their practice innovatory by comparison. The difference might lie in different or contrasting aims and purposes in the two sectors, probably more implicit than stated. The 'hands on' approach in schools is intentionally motivational; if pupils are engaged with teaching approaches that utilise new technologies, learning will probably be improved. Again it is probably the case that in the ITE sector learning design is an integral part of the VLE. We might like to consider our practice and ask why, in Secondary ITE, the

focus has very much been on discussion forums. It might be the temptation to remain in a comfort zone, discussion forums use very little technology but they undoubtedly support learning. However outcomes are measured; discussion forums provide tangible evidence that thoughtful, critical, reflective interaction is taking place. The use of discussion forums in a VLE to promote effective learning is one area, at least, where the ITE sector probably has a clear advantage over schools. The contrast between schools and ITE in the way that they employ technologies can also be seen at a strategic level where administrative tasks and record keeping in schools use technology in a number of highly effective ways. Experience suggests that while ITE might encourage beginning teachers to use information technology in their personal organisation, the bureaucratic procedures of the institution demand multiple hard copies of documentation.

Where and how can VLEs most effectively support beginning teachers on a secondary PGCE programme?

There are no obvious conclusions which can be drawn from this short survey. It may be that we have to be either less ambitious in the claims we make for VLEs in the context of a Secondary PGCE programme or that we recognise that existing good practice comes in a variety of forms and that the learning community – the network

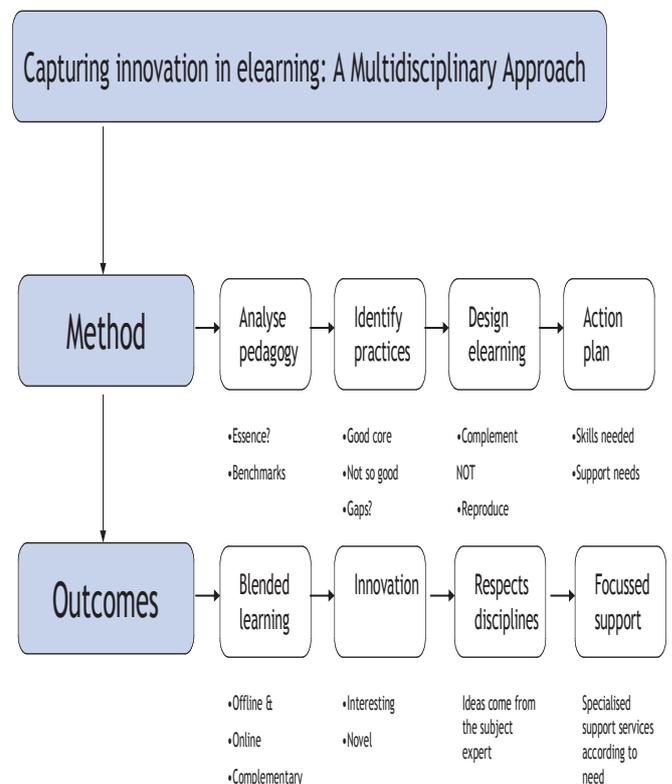


Fig 3.: Adapted from Harding D. Capturing Innovation in e-learning; a multidisciplinary approach. (2006) In Solstice Conference Proceedings, Edge Hill University

of professional and social support provided by a VLE is the element of e-learning most appreciated by beginning teachers. It is possible to use the VLE to demonstrate or develop the critical and analytical capabilities of beginning teachers but the nature of the PGCE programme makes it difficult to sustain this type of work over an extended period of time. Beginning teachers become pragmatists with a utilitarian outlook; it is an essential part of their professional development as well as a vital coping mechanism and a VLE will either be used because of course requirements or because they feel that it is a useful tool. It is perhaps up to PGCE tutors to adopt an equally pragmatic approach and develop a clearer understanding of ways in which a VLE can support their teaching and enhance the learning of beginning teachers. In this respect existing models of e-learning are less than helpful and it may be useful to define or develop a model of e-learning which reflects the nature of a Secondary PGCE programme.

Biography

Ian Phillips is Senior Lecturer and History PGCE Course Leader at Edge Hill University and Module leader for History and ICT; Database Design and Website Construction a final year history undergraduate module. He was formerly Head of History and Head of Humanities at Albany high School in Chorley, Lancashire. He has also worked for the Open University and at St Martin's College in Lancaster and was appointed Teaching and Learning Fellow in the Faculty of Education in Edge Hill in 2005. The focus of his fellowship work has been on the way that beginning secondary history teachers relate their graduate understanding of history to teaching history in the secondary school curriculum. He is also currently researching the effective use of VLEs in a secondary ITT context.

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3. So You Think You Know What Your Students Know? History graduates articulating their historical understanding - Ian Phillips, Edge Hill www.hca.heacademy.ac.uk/events/history/conferences/he2006/confShortProg.php

6. How do PGCE tutors enable beginning teachers to 'connect their learning' through Virtual Learning Environments? Can connections made through the VLE encourage creativity?

Ali Messer: Roehampton University.

Summary

This paper explores connections made by beginning teachers between university and school based work using a VLE (Virtual Learning Environment). It is suggested that the use of a VLE provides a way of connecting the learning of beginning teachers in the classroom with research literature, and with a reflective approach to their experiences. It is crucial to involve NQTs as e-mentors, and for subject tutors to use WebCT strategically as a set of communication tools rather than as an online course. The VLE can become the setting for the development of a dynamic community of practice, where beginning teachers can collaborate creatively whilst based in different schools. It is based on a workshop presented to ESCalate in May 2006, with Christine Hopkins, Principal Lecturer, Roehampton University.

Keywords

Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) / creative collaboration / e-mentors / Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) / trainees

Introduction

The aim here is to begin to explore some of the creative connections made by beginning teachers between university work and school based work through the use of a VLE (in this case, WebCT). Through the VLE, the classroom experiences of Roehampton University trainees on placement are linked explicitly to ideas about teaching and learning discussed in college; 'Learners must be provided with every opportunity to explore multiple perspectives ...that is, one activity is not enough to acquire a comprehensive view of a concept' (MacPherson and Nunes, 2004). The VLE also links trainees to their peers working in different schools and to colleagues with more teaching experience across the SWELTEC¹ Partnership (South West London Teacher Education Consortium). It can be difficult to explore a range of perspectives if trainees have 'a sense of detachment or even isolation whilst on placement' (Jordan-Daus, 2006). For some trainees, the VLE appears to reduce this sense of isolation. It is also suggested that, for some trainees, the VLE has the potential to promote creativity through collaboration.

Context: the development of a Creative Teaching Network

Roehampton University is one of four HEIs in SWELTEC and in 2005-6 there were around 230 beginning teachers on its PGCE Secondary programme², with 10 specialist subjects provided. Subject tutors run university based sessions for their specialist group, they assess beginning teachers on placement, and they are responsible for a team of mentors in schools, who have been recruited through the SWELTEC partnership. Looking for further ways to help trainees connect learning in different settings, we became involved in a TDA funded project. A Creative Teaching Network was set up, linking Roehampton University through a VLE (WebCT) to schools in the SWELTEC partnership.

Christine Hopkins described how this worked in practice with the 2004-5 Maths subject group:

During the college based part of the course the students were introduced to WebCT and encouraged to post messages ... The process was seeded by asking all students to post a message about their experience of visiting a primary school and how it was likely to influence their teaching. The students were then free to post any information that they thought would be useful to their colleagues. A typical posting by a student would include a teaching idea that they had tried and wanted to share with others. (Hopkins, 2004)

For the first time, in 2005-6, all trainees had access to a Subject specific module on WebCT. Four subject modules received more than 1,000 visits each, suggesting usage that was more intensive for trainees in those groups. The use of the VLE in the Secondary PGCE at Roehampton was conceived as a way of promoting collaboration and creativity between trainees on placement, rather than an online addition to an existing course. 'Learning activities [are]... 'authentic activities...embedded in realistic and relevant contexts (situated learning)' (MacPherson and Nunes, 2004), therefore, all subject sites included some materials designed to help beginning teachers on placement, such as lesson plan proformas and evaluation schemes. The VLE also enabled beginning teachers to communicate with each other whilst on placement. In some subjects, trainees were very positive, describing the VLE as 'My first port of call when looking for pedagogical reading material, resources and advice' and 'a fantastic resource for staying in touch and sharing resources' (Student evaluations summer 2006).

For some tutors, the discussion tools provided ways of making connections between qualified teachers and

beginning teachers. A good example of this was the English site, where a discussion thread called 'Ask Polly/Antonia' generated:

- ♦ Discussion between an NQT and PGCE beginning teachers;
- ♦ The exchange of teaching materials between participants in different schools;
- ♦ The exchange of teaching materials between participants who had not met each other.

Methodology

WebCT provides some basic tools to monitor site usage. Tutors can use the software provided to track students. Information was collected about:

- ♦ the number of times modules were accessed and by whom;
- ♦ tool usage;
- ♦ content usage and timing of usage in one subject module;
- ♦ contributions to discussion across a range of subjects.

The data provided by WebCT tools was not sufficient to answer our more far reaching questions about the nature of the network developing through the use of the VLE, and its potential for supporting the creativity of trainees. We became involved in a wider 'self-reflective enquiry' (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). Christine Hopkins, the leader of the Creative Teaching Network project, suggested we make all tutors auditors on every other Subject module. All tutors could see how other tutors were using the software provided. It was possible for all tutors to read all the discussions of all the trainees on the PGCE course, and to follow how they were constructing their own understanding of teaching. The discussion tool was also used by some trainees to exchange and develop teaching resources, and thus all tutors were able to observe online collaboration through the VLE as it grew over the year. Chris Hopkins and I discussed these discussions and then generated the categories of participation described later.

Further information was collected by a survey of all tutors, designed to begin to explore their perceptions of the usefulness of WebCT. The survey had its limitations, having been presented by an early adopter, and some tutors clearly felt unable to express their scepticism about aspects of WebCT. In addition, student evaluations and a student survey were employed to explore further the attitudes of beginning teachers in the History subject group. In each case, these surveys were largely focused on the mechanics of VLE usage. It would be more interesting, perhaps, to investigate further the central pedagogical issues involved, and so to capture better the role a VLE plays within a blended setting. We could ask tutors, for example, about the range of strategies that they use to enable trainees to collaborate on placement and the perceived benefits of these strategies. This

might enable us to ascertain more accurately the role of technological resources in enabling collaborative creativity as opposed to other resources.

Do new technological resources (specifically the use of a VLE and interactive white boards) have the potential to encourage creativity?

Miell and Littleton (2004) argue that, 'Taking a view of creativity as fundamentally and necessarily social, and in many cases an explicitly collaborative endeavour, can bring new and important insights'. For many trainees, the value of the VLE appears to be the interaction with their peers (social), and the exchange and development of resources and ideas (collaboration). In the next section, examples of collaborative resource development through discussion boards are examined.

Does the use of the discussion tool by the 2005-6 cohort suggest evidence of collaborative creativity?

The following examples illustrate indicators of different types of creativity, where online collaboration appears to have played a constructive role.

Example 1. The development of a single resource. The History Subject group are required to present work to their peers in their Spring Term university sessions. A trainee, using ideas found within the department of her first placement school (girls' school in leafy suburb), presented a resource on 'Bloody' Mary, and uploaded this to the VLE. An NQT then commented on this in discussion, attaching a variant on the resource. She had started her PGCE year at the same girls' school, but had to change and develop the resource to engage the able boys at her new school. This type of resource sharing already happens online between History teachers on the web. It may have more value for the trainees with the context of the VLE, however, as they know the other participants and have some idea about the settings in which their peers are working. The NQT had also modelled a useful approach to resources found online. Most materials need modification to match the context and the lesson objectives, and there is a danger in assuming they can be used undigested.

Example 2. Development promoted by feedback. The Maths group began a series of discussions about starters and plenaries that ran from September 2005 to May 2006. One resource, posted in November 2005 after trainees had begun their first placement, involved the use of an IWB (Interactive Whiteboard) activity to teach co-ordinates using an image and music from the Lion King. Eighteen of the twenty trainees who accessed the VLE took part. There were often days or even weeks between responses to the resources posted, as trainees waited for a relevant lesson to try out the ideas. There were positive comments such as; 'I used the main lion king page today with my bottom set... it was brilliant'

which was posted the next day; and nearly a month later, 'I used Stephen's starter. There was a real buzz in the classroom and a lot of constructive debate. The teacher loved it too and invited me to present it at the departmental meeting as part of good practice'. An interesting pattern developed, however, where some trainees would post comments, which, though equally positive, would include reflection on problems with resources borrowed and with new versions, attached to their discussion posting. By February 2006, the trainee who had invented the Lion King starter was posting his own improvement on the original idea, along with a new explanation about how it worked, apparently 'an internal reconstruction of an external operation' (Vygotsky, 1978).

Another trainee in another school had used the first version earlier in the year. On seeing the new version, she was keen to get into a room with an IWB to try out the developed resource. It seems even clearer here that the discussion forum has created a learning environment that might well enable trainees to take on new ideas when they are ready for them or need them. O'Hear and Sefton Green (in Miell and Littleton, 2004) observed this feature in their study of an informal online forum; '... communication on a message board is "asynchronous". This allows an idea or problem to be posted at the moment of discovery- and for it to be read and replied to by a wide range of participants because they don't have to be online at the same time...'. They also note that; 'Message boards set up to facilitate the exchange of practical knowledge tend not to discriminate between temporary and sustained collaboration', and 'that "just in time" creative collaboration is uniquely facilitated by the message board. However, as a tool it does not limit users. Features such as an ability to create dedicated topic forums and send private messages to individual users, allow ad hoc collaborations to develop into sustained and more developed relationships'.

The key role of e-mentors in enabling creative collaboration.

'Underpinning many researchers' interest in exploring and conceptualising the nature of creative collaboration is the need to understand how better to support such endeavours ...' (Miell and Littleton, 2004). At Roehampton, we have discovered that, for a significant minority of NQTs it was useful to be included in the module for the subsequent PGCE group as an e-mentor. One commented (by e-mail on VLE, May 2006): 'All I am really interested in is discussions and would like some good resources. I am keen to keep in touch with the conceptual thinking about history teaching- which is slightly ironic since I don't think I "really got it" during the course- but somehow it seems more real when dealing with pupil misconceptions on a daily basis ...'. In subjects such as Maths, English and History, e-mentors have sent resources to the PGCE module, and

participated in discussions. These e-mentors tend to be confident in reflecting upon their practice online, and are often attempting to be creative in their use of IWB. Recent success in their PGCE year, but with the added experience of the NQT year, enables these e-mentors to 'be credible as members of the learning community' (Salmon, 2004). They can provide challenge by suggesting developments taking trainees to the next step, working within their Zone of Proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

A crucial example of this may be seen when considering resources provided for use on an IWB. In a previous investigation, an analysis was made of the pedagogic styles implied by the resources trainees posted to the VLE, and 'classified as transmission based or directed towards connectivist teaching.' (Hopkins, 2004). Some trainees directed their creativity, for example, into making complex PowerPoint (PPT) presentations. These resources did not necessarily result in creative teaching. The following extracts track the journey taken by some participants in the History group in 2005-6. They begin by realising that they cannot use IWB and PowerPoint as they did in industry, and eventually get some ideas about the interactive use of IWB from an NQT.

A trainee wrote early in the first term:

'What is the best way to make use of PowerPoint in lessons? I have been using it as we might in the world of business - i.e. have a slide for every step in the lesson plan incl. title slide - ... I have discovered though that this doesn't work as I forget what I'm actually meant to be saying, except for what's on the slide. I find it impossible to expand! The result is staccato - plus, I am physically restricted to within grabbing distance of the mouse. I'm beginning to think that PPT and I just don't get on in the classroom, save for projecting the odd picture on the whiteboard. What are your experiences? Any tips? ...'

An NQT responded:

'I am using PPT in lessons for AS level a lot - as you said with key information up, and then I work from a print out and annotate with my own notes - expanding on key points and including questions I want to pose. I find the PPT really helpful at making me feel secure in my knowledge myself which is part of my particular battle since I'm teaching subject matter I never studied. Animation is the one big change from business ppt (where it was considered really naff) to kids - where you do want to reveal slowly. Also big flashy pop ups and cartoons - kids love them in a way that business didn't! **Big problem is it becoming too didactic [my emphasis]- ...'**

By December one trainee had given the IWB over to Y9

pupils to project presentations they had created for themselves about campaigners for women's suffrage in early 20th century Britain, and then uploaded pupil work to the VLE. The responses show that by this time trainees are drawing on their experiences in their first placement to reflect on the examples posted to the VLE. 'From my experience, there are always students who don't participate much in class but who shine when asked to put together a PPT presentation' wrote one. Another commented: 'I would possibly try and modify this activity to include some sort of "evaluative" process as opposed to the descriptive/biographical approach. This might help the more able gain more?' Some trainees had made the transition from a focus on the use of ICT in their own learning to reflection about the value of the learning for pupils. The emphasis was no longer on creative presentations by the teacher but on the creative use of ICT by pupils.

Another stage on was the realisation that using interactive whiteboards (IWB) interactively is not easy. Again, the involvement of an NQT helped the discussion to 'move on' (Maynard and Furlong, 1993). A trainee wrote in January:

'...here's a summary of my seminar...I thought it would be ...useful to summarise what everyone said and give the references I used if anyone wants to do some further reading....Having spent my first block experience mainly using the IWB as a presentation tool and I want to explore ways in which to use it further.'

We talked about the benefits of presenting information on the IWB. Clearly there are many: The IWB can function as a classroom management tool, focusing pupils' attention on the board, increasing the pace of the lesson as the teacher doesn't have to stop to write up things on the board, and adding colour and images to motivate and engage pupils. It also allows the teacher to reveal information as and when it is needed, provide further information for extension tasks and to show video clips on a large screen.

We then discussed what more could be done with an IWB. Many people have used the smartboard note book feature and think that it is useful for moving things around the screen - good for sorting and matching activities and cloze texts.

There is also the spotlight feature - useful for focusing on particular parts of images or texts. Some people had seen more advanced features being used too - the camera and recording tools - perhaps more use of these should be encouraged?

We talked about getting pupils to write on the IWB. Is this practical and/or beneficial? One suggestion was that

allowing a small number of pupils to write on the board could encourage group work and debate - pupils could work together in groups to decide the answers to tasks, before one pupil then comes and writes it on the board. There is also the issue of when to use the IWB - are there times when a worksheet or normal board would do the same job and save the teacher a lot of preparation time? We agreed that there is no point in using the board just for the sake of it - only if it furthers the pupils' learning, helping to meet the objectives of the lessons.

Finally there was the issue of using the IWB to access the web:

'I always fear that the web might crash or not be accessible during my lesson. That said, we all agree that there are lots of very useful websites out there for teaching history - but once again its an issue of making sure the activity includes ALL the pupils and meets the objectives of the lesson...'

Two weeks later, an NQT responded:

'Hi everyone Hope you don't mind me posting, but wanted to give an idea of how a couple of people here at L. are using the IWB... I've managed to have a go myself too, and the results were great. Basically, the idea is to get students sorting and categorising information and to use the record function to record what they are saying to each other as they sort the stuff... whilst one group are doing this, the rest of the groups are sorting the same info but on good old cards on their desks.... Once the first group have sorted on the IWB and recorded, you get the next group up to look at the first groups sorting and then RE-SORT it, explaining why (record this) - do this process with each group... then, give the whole class further info./ knowledge and get them back up to the board to resort their information based on what they now know. I did this using sources about WWI - "how can we ever really know what life was like in the trenches?"; they had to sort a whole range of sources onto an X axis (useful / not useful) and Y axis (trustworthy / not trustworthy).... The resulting level of discussion was really impressive - each group scaffolded the next group's thinking and so the quality of debate and discussion was brilliant. And I was just stood at the back of the classroom watching! Another way we've been using the IWB is as a film editor - ... Using silent footage from Pathe about the Irish civil war which followed the 1922 treaty we get the students to select clips from the film and write a news report to record over the top of them as if they were either a supporter of Collins or Valera - as the report is played the rest of the

class must decide who the report favours and what evidence from the report led them to believe this. It's an interesting way of getting the students to understand that all history is interpretation by getting to make their very own interpretations. On a wider / citizenship level, it teaches them (hopefully) that everything they see and hear on radio / TV / web is 'created' in some way for a certain audience...'

Further debate about the technicalities followed. In each case, an impressive feature of the postings is the way that the views and experiences of others were incorporated into the discussion. In addition, the focus is clearly on the value of the activities described for the learning of pupils. As in the Maths thread (above), and in the 'Ask Polly/Antonia' thread (above), this discussion suggests that we are moving closer to using the VLE to share creative teaching, as intended by Chris Hopkins.

How do we ensure that as many participants as possible gain from this level of collaboration and debate?

One way is by recognising patterns of interaction with the VLE as tutors, and encouraging those that are helpful. It is possible to recognise three main types of participant (or participation) that drive discussion towards collaboration and creativity.

One type is the 'flash' student. This trainee typically asks good questions that spark debate and reflection. They make their thinking explicit and can sometimes provide useful concrete examples illustrating their current stage in development. This is the value in using discussion to upload student content to the VLE; the linked content has the potential to make the message contribution of greater value to a range of other participants. In the survey of the 10 Subject tutors, 6/10 subjects had trainees who sent messages with content attached to the VLE whilst on placement. (It is worth noting here, however, that in at least two subject sites usage was lower because trainees were already using the web creatively and successfully, without needing a VLE to facilitate this. One tutor wrote: 'We have SO much stuff we could have on there - we've even been putting our stuff on gallery websites but somehow not our own! I don't think the Art crew are particularly technophobic but they don't use it a great deal for communicating - more creating!' Arguably, these 'flash' students were already seeking a wider audience beyond their professional context.

A second type is the 'productive lurker'. Lurkers have had a bad press. In our context, it means trainees who take resources and ideas posted by their peers and put them to work in their own classrooms. Again, as the resources are initially posted to discussion, these

trainees are more likely to see that a resource originating in one context may not work in their own unless developed. In the survey of the 10 Subject tutors, 4/10 tutors observed trainees using materials gained from the VLE, and in at least two cases, it had been developed and improved by the trainee. The 'productive lurker' may be less visible online but off-line some are beginning to make good use of what they have gleaned from the VLE.

A third type, 'frequent fliers' provide a vital component in the development of the VLE. These trainees find it easy to log in regularly, they typically post short messages offering positive comments, thus encouraging participation. They also fly kites by asking questions, posing problems, making wild suggestions, and expecting someone else to reply, they make the VLE a lively environment where there is always something happening. Cleary and Meredith emphasised the value to discussion of those who pose questions, give support and affirmation, or simply thank other participants, (Cleary and Meredith, 2006). It would be easy to underestimate the importance of this to the learning environment.

The role of the tutor is, in part, to ensure that all these types of participation are respected. One way to do this is to feed back to participants the patterns of VLE usage. They can then 'see' the role of the 'productive lurker', and perhaps can seek out opportunities to play the 'flash' or 'frequent flier' role. Another approach that has the potential to encourage creativity is the strategic use of student content on our VLE. There is a consensus amongst the Secondary PGCE team at Roehampton University that we are interested in using WebCT to support and challenge our trainees throughout the year, not to develop an online course as such. We have experimented with a variety of ways of making student content available, including presenting it as templates or exemplars. In History, for example, exemplars are taken from discussion postings and grafted onto session notes and reading about pedagogical issues. For some participants, NQTs as well as PGCE trainees, this appears to have connected their learning in a different way. A concrete lesson resource, linked to a theoretical perspective, appears to encourage some participants to greater creativity in their lesson planning. They see the need to reconsider their approach, and are given a rationale and example to begin the process of change. It would be interesting to design ways of investigating the processes involved more closely.

A simple example will illustrate the possibilities. In 2004-5, a weak trainee with a didactic teaching style based on a conception of History as information-giving, took a resource about significant individuals in the History of Medicine from the VLE. She adapted this resource into an activity enabling pupils to compare the significance of

Civil Rights leaders in the USA. She then posted this resource back to the VLE. This was one of the first indications that this trainee had begun to change her focus from information-giving to analysis and from a didactic approach to the encouragement of active learning. It is not suggested that the VLE was the only element in her transformation. The example did work, in 2005-6, as a graphic illustration (in a session on significance) for the new cohort. They were encouraged to see resources on the VLE not as ways of teaching topics, but as ways of teaching and learning History. This is an important development, as many of the online resource exchanges for practising History teachers are limited in their contribution to the development of some trainees in part as they are topic based.

Initial conclusions

The use of a VLE does provide a way of connecting the learning of beginning teachers in the classroom, with research literature, and with a reflective approach to their experiences. It is crucial to involve NQTs as e mentors, and for subject tutors to use WebCT strategically as a set of communication tools rather than an online course. Beginning teachers quickly learn how to use these tools for themselves, after some modelling from tutors and with the support of NQTs as e-mentors. The VLE can then become setting for the development of a dynamic community of practice, where there is potential for beginning teachers to collaborate creatively. We would now like to know more about the range of strategies tutors use to enable trainees to collaborate on placement, and the perceived benefits of these strategies. It would be interesting to involve school based mentors in determining the impact of collaboration on the experiences of pupils in the classroom, as the purpose of creative collaboration between teachers should be the learning of their students. This was, naturally, beyond the scope of the current enquiry. It would also be beneficial to explore and to refine the categories of participation in the VLE, through involving the trainees themselves in reflecting upon their own learning.

Biography

Ali Messer runs the History Secondary PGCE course at Roehampton University and is interested in using VLE to develop creative collaboration between teachers. Christine Hopkins' teaching and research is in the field of Mathematics Education. Christine set up the Roehampton Secondary PGCE Creative Teaching Network in 2004.

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Footnotes

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7. What is the role of the tutor in stimulating useful communication on a VLE? A case study of use on a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Primary course

Kate Cleary: Bradford College, Margaret Meredith : School of Teaching Health and Care.

Summary

Many Initial Teacher Education institutions are adopting Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) for enhanced access to resources. Their use for communication is sometimes less well developed and less well understood. In this paper we explain what we learnt about effective tutor involvement in promoting communication during the highly successful pilot year with the 2004-5 Primary cohort, which was commended by Ofsted for enhancing communication and student experience on the course. Interaction analysis was used to explore the impact of subject specialist tutors' involvement in discussion and the use of questioning by them.

Keywords

VLE / online discussions / PGCE / communication / asynchronous / Initial Teacher Education

Context

The PGCE Primary course at Bradford College enables students to meet the professional standards for Qualified Teacher Status in the primary sector and the requirements for study at postgraduate level 4. It is 38 weeks long, full-time. 18 of those weeks are spent on placement at school, the remainder in college-based lectures. Students are trained to teach all the subjects of the primary curriculum. Students must have basic ICT skills before entry onto the course. In 2004-5 there were 98 full-time, college-based students, 14 flexible/part-time, college-based students and 5 full-time students based on the island of Jersey on the course. There were 25 tutors teaching on the course.

Why did we use a VLE?

The Virtual Learning Environment 'WebCT' had been previously used in the college by some tutors on teacher education courses. For the first time WebCT, driven by the course leader, was used consistently across the whole course for the 2004-5 cohort. Two main reasons were cited by the course leader and other tutors for its use. The first was entirely practical; it was hoped that it would provide an additional channel of communication for course-wide issues. Given the improved access to this information, tutors would be able to act more quickly and effectively in response to student need and concerns. Tutors mentioned the practical aspects of being able to post notices from home and the quickness of responses to student questions; the 'possibility of getting some dialogue going' and of getting a more informed picture of the course from a student perspective.

The course leader also had a more ideological vision of the use of this technology:

'Quite idealistically - the development of a learning community, access to which is place

and time independent. I would like to use WebCT to make the teaching and learning process more effective and interactive.'

The focus was upon enhanced communication within the existing, full time, face-to-face course, rather than move towards a 'blended learning' (part online, part face-to-face) approach. We applied many of the principles of communication in online or blended learning to promote improved communication in an existing face-to-face course.

Stephenson (2001:220) describes the many forms of communication now possible with online technology. There can be dialogue between teacher-student, student-student, and in the form of specialist closed groups, open groups, in real time ('synchronous') or over a period of time ('asynchronous'), one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-many. (See table 1).

It is the 'asynchronous', one-to-many discussion which is considered to be truly significant to education, and that has attracted comment, investigation and analysis by many writers within education (see, for example, Salmon (2000); Stephenson (2001)). Discussion of this new medium of communication has led to claims that a traditional and motivated 'community of inquiry' (Garrison and Anderson, 2003:xi) could become a reality, in which students and tutors engage in deeper levels of reflection.

How did we set up the discussions in WebCT?

WebCT for the PGCE Primary 2004-5 course offered a link to course materials for each curriculum subject area, some of which are shown in figure 1.

It was realised that on a course as intense as the PGCE Primary, all discussions would potentially be of interest to all students. They were likely to cover general issues around pedagogy, classroom management and planning,

	One sender to one recipient	One sender to many recipients
Asynchronous communication	Email	Discussions
Synchronous communication	Chat (such as Yahoo Messenger)	Chat (such as Yahoo Messenger)

Table 1: Types of online communication

and other course-related issues as well as academic ones. For this reason we decided not to separate discussions into subject areas, choosing instead to create a 'Base and Communications Hub' which would contain all general course-related information and through which all communication would flow. The communication facility within the subject areas on WebCT was removed. This avoided the danger of students searching through the various subject areas in the hope of finding someone who could respond to their posting or deal with their concerns. Within the Hub, and

Figure 1: Base and Communications Hub and Subject Areas within the PGCE Primary course

following Salmon's (2000:30) suggestion to evoke physical spaces, the discussions were organised into the following areas (see figure 2):

- The coffee bar** – for social discussions
- The office** – for administrative issues

The classroom – for professional/academic discussions

This enabled students to adopt a suitable tone for different types of contributions, and set out markers about the range of contributions that would be welcome.

Figure 2: Discussion areas

What did tutors do to encourage contributions to the discussions?

WebCT training sessions for tutors, based around promoting pedagogical aims through the use of this technology, were offered several months prior to the start of the PGCE course. In addition, 'just in time' support was offered throughout the year as interest grew, both in terms of numbers of staff and in their purposes for using WebCT.

Students were informed that WebCT would be an essential part of their course in pre-course literature. They were introduced to WebCT in their first ICT taught session and encouraged to contribute to the discussion postings that had been put up specifically to encourage involvement at this point in the course. As well as gaining ease and familiarity with the online medium, the development of a sense of community is critical to the success of online communication. Following on from a face-to-face session in induction week, students were asked to contribute thoughts about their best teachers, which could be considered an 'identity-bonding issue' (Salmon, 2000:29) in the creation of the online community. Tutors also participated in this discussion. During the following week, two students initiated their own discussions and this trend escalated as the course continued.

After induction the course leader made information available only on WebCT, motivating reluctant students or those with access problems to resolve these issues promptly. This 'baptism of fire' approach, arguably necessary for this new way of working, meant that students ensured their own secure access within several days of the induction. Access was rewarded with interaction with other students very quickly. A trickle of students entering over a protracted period of time would have led to a less dynamic start.

The most significant contributions made by tutors towards the success of the discussions can be summarised under the following four headings:

1. Tutor role in encouraging and setting tone.

Many writers are in agreement about the initial encouraging role which is key to enabling students to feel at ease with the medium. Davie (1989:82), for example, emphasises that the facilitator needs to pay careful attention to welcoming each student to the electronic course, and to reinforce early attempts to communicate.

The course leader was a dynamic presence in the discussion areas, which quickly became lively. Each time a new discussion topic was started by a student she quickly responded with encouraging comments, 'thanks for sharing ...', 'I'm delighted to hear that ...'. She was also quick to answer questions and clarify misconceptions or deal with problems.

Tutors on the course also shared information of both a practical and academic nature, and responded to questions and requests for help. Students adopted this supportive tone in responding to each other.

A tutor commented that:

'They [discussions] are encouraging thought and consideration. People are reading carefully what's asked and responding to each others' need.'

This view was echoed by a student:

'The information they [peers and tutors] have provided has been up to date, non judgemental and extremely useful.'

2. The speed of response in interactions

Issues raised by students were dealt with promptly – usually on the same day and often within several hours. Tutors cited the need for 'immediate reassurance' and students praised the role of WebCT in 'reducing isolation' on block practice.

Students clearly appreciated this, expressing views such as: 'Even when we're not in college we don't feel out of touch with people' and 'I feel supported, that someone is there to help continuously'. The course leader logged onto the system several times a day. This could be done from home when necessary and reduced the need for her to be physically present in her office to be available for students. She also ring fenced time and logged on more frequently at specific times when students were likely to need immediate support and advice, such as when assignment feedback was given to students. Some of this communication was of a private nature and the e-mail facility within WebCT was used rather than open

discussions. The fact that WebCT had become a 'community' meant that students often turned to it in the first instance when they needed to discuss issues of a personal nature. This may not have happened had only conventional e-mail been available, a medium which does not necessarily promote a sense of community.

Many writers comment upon a lack of participation in asynchronous discussion amongst students, with only a minority contributing to the debates. When work is posted in a discussion form one can wonder whether anyone has read it and how it was received, involving a 'leap across the ridicule threshold' (Grint, 1989:189). Fears are magnified if feedback is not forthcoming, creating further resistance to contributing, according to Davie (1989:80). It can be concluded that responses from tutors should be quick, or that expectations of when feedback can be forthcoming are carefully managed. Pilkington (2004) sees the lack of immediate feedback, along with a low frequency of responses, as potentially isolating for students.

3. The role of discussions to inform future planning and support.

Purposeful and useful communication on a course will be promoted when students perceive their needs and concerns are being listened to and addressed. According to tutors, comments from students on WebCT did 'inform planning and delivery of taught sessions'.

Although particular issues surfaced on WebCT, the most effective place for dealing with them was sometimes face-to-face sessions or tutorials, allowing for both the clearing up of misconceptions and targeted support.

One student ventured to express her concerns over her academic work:

'Student (discussion): Not sure whether I'm just having a blonde moment or not but is anyone else having real difficulty understanding the articles in the TLS reader? What was supposed to take us an hour to read has taken me all afternoon sat with the dictionary trying to work out what they are actually saying. I decided to move on to the second one and found that one even worse. Not sure how I can critically analyse something which I don't understand!'

The response from her fellow students suggested she was not alone in her concerns. Tutors were thus able to deal with the issue promptly and effectively, responding and providing support in both WebCT and taught sessions.

4. The impact of subject specialist tutor involvement
Where subject specialists initiated or participated in

discussion, evidence could be seen of enrichment and further development of the discussion, evoking the 'community of enquiry' vision. As one tutor commented: 'It enables us to continue discussions started in class therefore extending the amount of time we have with them.'

Subject-specific discussions were often initiated by students. This one related to Ancient Greece:

Student (discussion):

'[Tutor name], can you recommend a story book please that I could use get to start the ball rolling as we are studying this topic after Christmas in my school? I have a year 5 class. Any other recommendations (websites, themes, practical stuff etc.) would be gratefully appreciated! Thanks.'

This elicited various responses from three students, and five from the subject specialist tutor, covering ideas for using stories, film, creating comic strips using the digital camera, art and craft activities, a list of relevant websites, information about borrowing artifacts, offers of resources, reference to a subject area of WebCT, sharing of planning and scanned work by children. The discussion later moved on to details of the teachers' library in the city, whose existence was previously unknown to one contributor. The tutor extended the discussion by offering further ideas, praising contributions from students, requesting more information from students, involving a student by name who was known to have information on the subject and giving information about available resources. The discussion ended with the original student offering resources on another subject, in gratitude for all the helpful replies, something may have been encouraged not only by the responses to her posting, but also by the tone of the interactions in general on WebCT.

How structured were the discussions?

The discussions on our course were found to be exceptionally useful to students and provided a 'lifeline' for support as well as creating a community of professionals. These discussions met the most optimistic hopes of tutors, in terms of monitoring course issues, giving support and information and encouraging the sharing of good practice.

The strong tutor-to-student and student-to-student support given and developed throughout the year reflected that discussed in the literature. However, contrary to information in much of the literature, the students did not respond to a structured, embedded approach to the discussions and valued having a good measure of control of the medium. Throughout the year, discussions which involved lengthy and reflective contributions were rare, however. An insight into why this

might be was provided by a tutor:

'The general panic of doing a PGCE can work against these aims (investigation, reflection). Students tend to want "the answer" on a very practical level.'

The already intense and full-time nature of the course arguably promoted a 'survival' approach, which expressed itself on WebCT as short, question-answer type exchanges.

By the end of the course, over 200 000 hits had been registered by students on the Base and Communications Hub, and the main activity within this had been the discussions. Over 1700 messages had been posted by students on the discussion forums.

Lack of contributions is cited by some authors as a problem, but this was not our experience. We would draw parallels with Harasim's (2002) reflections on the lively discussion on the Global Educators' Network (GEN). She describes the principles upon which it flourished. Of paramount importance was the participant-centred nature of the community; it has been allowed to adapt and evolve to suit its members. The network operated on the basis of its members' shared goals and experiences; there was no obligation to participate according to a set structure; 'reading along' (p.139) was acceptable. Members were encouraged to join a discussion at any time and there was no obligation to do so. Additionally, she notes that there was always something new and fresh on the network to build expectations. We believe that this freedom to take the discussions in the direction of their choosing, and in response to perceived strong need, was what drove the success of WebCT with our students.

Methodology used in the study

The authors were participant observers in this case study. They used tutor and student questionnaires, following these up with short 'interviews' by email where participants expressed consent for this. The authors also had an asynchronous discussion by email during the year about issues arising from the use of WebCT. This avoided the need to formally meet – always difficult on a regular basis in a busy department, but also sought to make the most of the opportunity to reflect which is intrinsic to the medium.

As good practice themes emerged, use was made of a form of 'interaction analysis' to examine patterns of use in a more objective way.

Observation of discussions

Snapshots of discussions from the 'Classroom' area were drawn out which we believed to be indicative of wider patterns of use.

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One of these was at the very beginning of the course illustrating the induction to WebCT and early usage; the other was chosen to reflect a time of more mature usage, in the sense of familiarity and established of patterns of use. The contributions to discussions were coded, as shown in table 2.

Type of interaction	Definition
(Tutor or student) Thanks/praises/affirms	Thanking for contribution on WebCT or face-to-face aspect of the course; positively acknowledging a contribution by, for example, referring to it and building upon it. Does not include simply answering a question.
(Tutor or student) Initiates: shares information/ advice	Volunteers some information. May be to advise on practical matter, such as release of document onto WebCT; share a web site; invite comment; raise an issue
(Tutor or student) Responds: shares information/ advice	Responds to a discussion posting with information or advice
(Tutor only) Asks question to stimulate discussion	Begins or encourages continuation of discussion by asking an open ended question
(Student only) Asks question/requests help	Flags up need for help or advice

Table 2: Coding of discussions for interaction analysis

In this method of structured observation we have combined techniques, such as: 'interaction analysis' (Flanders (1970), cited in Robson, 1993: 211) in which behaviour is coded and a table is completed giving the events taking place in sequence; 'event sampling' (Cohen et al., 2000:308), in which researchers mark a tally chart showing the number of times a type of behaviour occurs. Neither of these methods was sufficient to capture the asynchronous nature of the conversations, nor were they able to illustrate the overlapping of the topics of discussion. The use of a grid with dates and the use of colour to indicate each topic of discussion provide a visual record of the flow of interactions, as shown in figure 3.

This provided a new perspective on data collected in other ways, notably that of the speed of response in interactions and the impact of subject specialist tutor involvement. When triangulated with other methods, an

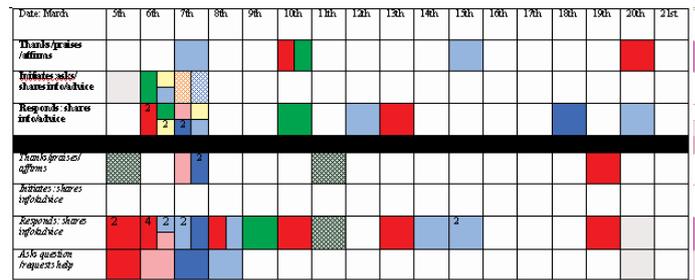


Figure 3: Layout of the interaction analysis used

insight into interaction patterns not otherwise available was provided.

Conclusion

Students created and benefited from a learning community through their use of WebCT, gaining effective support from each other and from tutors. Tutors did not dictate the content, but were a constant presence. The Ofsted inspection of 2005-6 commented favourably on the role that WebCT communication played in meeting individual need, in supporting students and in the provision of a unique student experience. Inspectors also acknowledged that WebCT provided an additional forum for student feedback that in turn modified the course.

Biographies

Kate Cleary is the PGCE Primary Course Tutor in the School of Teaching Health and Care at Bradford College. She is Senior Lecturer in History with an interest in ICT

Margaret Meredith was Senior Lecturer in ICT at Bradford College at the time of this study. She now works in teacher education in York St John University. She has an MA in ICT in education.

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8. Video as a tool to support practitioner enquiry.

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Summary

At Newcastle University the new Masters level Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) involves student teachers in videoing their lessons to enable a more enquiring approach to lesson evaluation. This includes ecological analysis, critical incident analysis, coding of transcriptions of short sections of lessons and is combined with tasks and a structured review process involving the mentor and student. As such it incorporates core tools in action research and encourages a particular type of professional dialogue to take place. This paper presents an initial review of this work, highlighting the way that it has developed the mentoring process and the students' understanding of their professional learning. The discussion is set within the context of forming communities of enquiry that enable partnership between the university and schools to promote the integration of theory and practice.

Keywords

Professional learning; tools for enquiry / using video in Initial Teacher Education / professional dialogue

The transition to the Masters level Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE)

As a result of changes in policy regarding Initial Teacher Education universities in England and Wales face the question of how to ensure that the route into the teaching profession via Higher Education is both distinctive and genuinely post-graduate. The PGCE team at Newcastle University decided to redesign the existing primary and secondary courses in order to meet the criteria for work at Masters level. Our reasons for making this decision were threefold: we believed it to be important that as our students were graduates then their further training to enter the profession should be at a higher, post-graduate, academic level; our experience of working with practising teachers in collaborative research projects confirmed the importance for the profession of being confident in the use of research and evidence to inform teaching; as staff in a research intensive university we were required (and wanted) to demonstrate synergy between teaching and research.

The transition to the Masters level PGCE, whilst posing challenges, was made easier by the fact that two years earlier some of the PGCE tutors had been instrumental in developing a new Masters course focusing on practitioner enquiry in which significant changes had been made to the content, style of teaching and forms of assessment. The fact that the MEd in Practitioner Enquiry was established meant that we could develop the PGCE course as the first year of this programme with students being given the choice to either leave at the end of the year with a PGCE and QTS or to continue into the second year and complete the MEd part-time. Promoting reflective practice was central to the redesign of the PGCE course and, although this had always been implicit in our practice as tutors, we now needed to heighten the profile of the use of evidence and research

in the process of becoming a teacher. We also needed to ensure that the collaborative nature of our partnership with schools was maintained and that we did not introduce a theory/practice divide in our work and so joint enquiry and research activity involving school-based mentors and students in schools was an essential feature. However, it was still necessary for students to meet the standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and as time is limited on a PGCE course, any developments needed to be grounded in the daily realities of school life to be achievable.

The PGCE course (and the MEd of which it now forms a part) is based on the core principle of going beyond a skills based competence model whilst recognising the importance of integrating theory and practice. From the tutors' perspective, we had a number of questions arising from our collective experience over the years:

- ◆ How can we enable students to capitalise on the link between their everyday school experiences and what is experienced by others in complex educational contexts?
- ◆ How can students' past, current and future school experiences be drawn together to maximise professional learning opportunities?
- ◆ How to ensure that we offer an education beyond training?
- ◆ How can we help students to make sense of the dichotomies they will encounter?

Discussion amongst the team, analysis of assignments and course evaluations completed by previous cohorts of PGCE students enabled us to identify a number of dichotomies experienced by students in the process of learning to be a teacher:

- ♦ Academic v practical
- ♦ Reflection v action
- ♦ Subjectivity v objectivity
- ♦ Learning v teaching
- ♦ Knowledge v application
- ♦ Specialism v generic aspects

The students work on a portfolio throughout the year recording a cycle of lesson observations, individual and collaborative school-based tasks analysing aspects of teaching and learning and an action research project; this forms a cycle of enquiry.

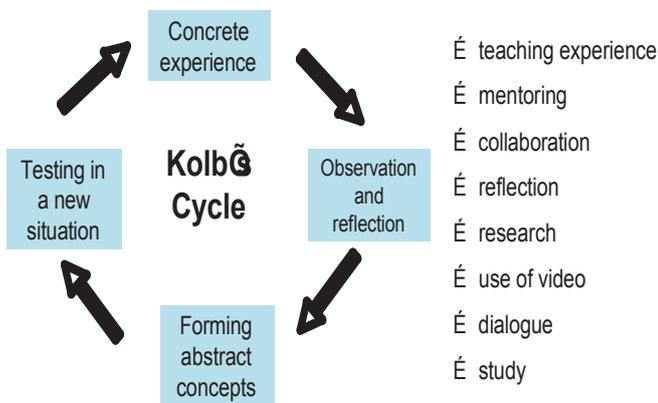


Figure 1: Professional Learning through practitioner enquiry

We have developed an assessment triangle that is used for both formative and summative assessment and informs our curriculum design.



Figure 2: PGCE/MEd Core Principles

The triangle reflects debates within the course team regarding the similarities and differences between Initial Teacher Education (ITE), professional learning and practitioner enquiry. It is not possible to go into details regarding this here but, whilst we recognise differences between these three, not least the transition from novice to expert, we have identified some common features: the role of enquiry in learning; the use of tools to stimulate and support enquiry; the importance of collaboration. This paper considers the development of tools for

enquiry during the first year of the new PGCE course and the use of video in particular.

Tools for enquiry and the use of video

We use a range of different tools with a common aim of enabling students to make aspects of their experience during the PGCE year explicit and so amenable to investigation. The tools we provide serve as a means of instigating enquiry whilst also supporting the process by giving the student concrete means of accessing and analysing their routines and practices in the classroom. The importance of providing such tools has long been recognised within the pragmatist tradition (Dewey, 1988) and has been validated by recent work with teachers in a number of different contexts (Baumfield, 2006), including a country wide initiative for professional development in Sweden (Ronnerman, 2003).

For a number of years individual tutors had been using a form of ecological analysis and providing a template for students to analyse classroom experiences in order to facilitate the review of a range of contributory, interlinking factors and processes. The template is organised around the inputs, which include the existing conditions and emotions as well as planning; the experience itself with prompt questions to encourage students to focus on making links between events; the outcomes, which again includes feelings as well as events and emphasises finding opportunities for learning. Critical incident analysis (Tripp, 1993) had also been used but was not standard practice across the course and a few tutors had experimented with the idea of students compiling a video diary of lessons. The transition to the Masters level PGCE enabled tutors to come together and review the different tools they used and to develop a coherent set of tasks to enable students to enquire into their emerging practice in the classroom. In order to ensure that the process involved school based mentors and was given priority we developed a 'Thinking through Teaching' portfolio to be compiled over the year, including during both school placements, and which was assessed and earned 40 of the total 60 credits awarded for the PGCE. The portfolio was structured as follows:

- ♦ **OBSERVATION** of lessons
 - Consider characteristics of successful learning and teaching
- ♦ **UNDERSTANDING AND DEVELOPING OWN PRACTICE** in the transition from novice teacher
 - Collaborative lesson planning (with mentor)
 - Videoing own teaching
 - Reflective tools: mentoring dialogue, ecological analysis and critical incident analysis
- ♦ **ACTION RESEARCH** as a tool for professional development and school improvement
 - Student uses tools of practitioner enquiry to undertake own research
 - Contextualises this in wider practice and literature

Two cycles were completed during the year to reflect professional development over two school placements. Using video was now standard across the course and in the first cycle students were given a choice from a menu of possible foci; teacher explanation, a question and answer session, a lesson plenary and (for Modern Foreign Language students) the use of the target language. Whatever the choice of focus the procedure supported by the tools involved completing an annotated transcription of the appropriate section of the lesson in the first cycle and in the second cycle students identified their own critical incident. In both cases, students and their mentors were guided through the following stages:

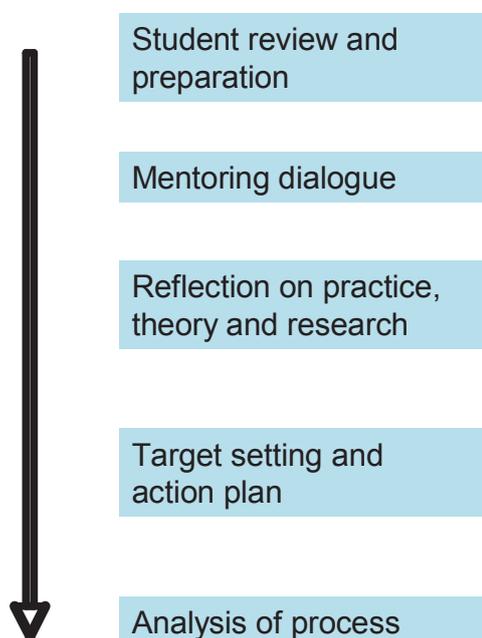


Figure 3: The stages in the use of video

Using video poses some ethical issues and this was addressed under the wider remit of research ethics and specific guidance given regarding the implications of the Data Protection Act 1998 (HMSO, 1998). Many of the partnership schools in which students completed placements already had school policies and parental agreements in place regarding the use of photographs and video and those that did not were able to facilitate the use of video for the students. In only two instances were schools unable to support students in using video and this has since been addressed for subsequent cohorts of students. As a rule of thumb, students were given the 3Ps to remind them of the importance of remembering: privacy, permission and purpose.

Students found the video to be a powerful tool as it made it clear to them what they were doing in the lesson in a more direct and forceful way than their own impressions at the time or the mentor's comments on the observation sheets completed on a weekly basis. The following selection of quotes from a range of students after the

first cycle is an indication of the revelatory experience of using video:

'It became clear that the same pupils kept answering the questions...I started to be more deliberately inclusive.'

'Looking at the detail of what I said and did made sense of my mentor's comments.'

'I became aware of how I was using subject and general language – and realised I had pitched the lesson too high.'

'I transcribed 10 minutes of the lesson – and had only asked closed questions.'

Analysis of the portfolios after the second cycle in the use of video show the features associated with the development of enquiry emerging as the cognitive dissonance evident in the first cycle is deepened:

'I thought I had hidden my anxiety well during the lesson...I watched the video and then understood what my mentor meant...'

Making aspects of behaviour more explicit through the video and the other tools of analysis stimulated a more robust form of professional dialogue and enabled the students to make connections with other sources of evidence, including research:

'It allowed me to approach the mentor session with a clearer sense of my own views and ability to articulate my position on what had happened and why.'

Students were taking a wider perspective and there are early indications that the dichotomies they faced were open to resolution:

'I have learned to look at circumstances and incidents that arise during my teaching as elements of a wider process...they can inform how I deal with a range of situations.'

The features identified from this snapshot across the cohort of students are further elucidated through a particular instance of the impact on a mentor and student from the secondary PGCE course.

Partnership in practice: a case study of mentoring

When Liz began her final teaching placement during her Secondary PGCE course at Newcastle University she had already made use of video to observe herself teaching. During her first placement it had allowed her to transcribe a whole class question and answer session. Her written reflection of this experience describes how video allowed her to 'gain a concrete understanding of what occurred in the lesson'. Having done this she recognised immediately patterns in her questioning style,

such as her tendency to pay attention to the boys as contributors rather than the girls, and that her questions tended not to provide significant cognitive challenge. The fact that Liz recognised this for herself gave her the opportunity to analyse with her mentor the possible causes, and go on to set herself targets for future lessons. Mentoring time was thus focussed on analysis rather than description of behaviours. She recognised that privileging boys over girls had been a 'behaviour management technique [which] did not work and this was an issue which I addressed in the next lesson'. The significance of this process as a learning experience becomes apparent when Liz writes:

'At the end of the lesson I was aware that not everything had gone how I had hoped but I could not pinpoint where I had gone wrong. Through careful transcription and in-depth evaluation by both me and my mentor I was able to recognise a number of points for improvement.'

At the start of her second placement, her department mentor, Steve, recognised Liz's instant willingness to be self-evaluative and proactive in her own learning. Indeed her approach prompted an unsolicited communication to her tutor to that effect. Undoubtedly Liz was motivated to work hard throughout the course, but the key difference appeared to be her self-determination and ability to focus on areas that she wanted to develop and to seek evidence to help her evaluate her own practice. The evidence did not always come from video, but the understanding of the need for evidence was well established.

When Liz made another video of herself teaching it was the first time that she had taught the chosen class. A post-hoc critical incident analysis revealed that 91% of the answers were given by boys. Armed with this evidence and her experience of working on improving question and answer sessions from the first placement, she had a constructive mentoring conversation. Steve confirmed that boys routinely answered more questions than girls, and was keen to support Liz in investigating the issue further. In her reflective commentary Liz wrote:

'My interest in this issue left me wanting to discover why some pupils might feel they could not contribute to classroom discussion, so I went, with the teacher's permission, into their next geography lesson to observe. While the students were completing a task, I had the opportunity to talk with some of them and ask why those that participated in question and answer sessions in class did, and why the others did not.'

Liz and Steve also discussed proactive strategies for altering the dominant pattern and mapped out a plan to use and evaluate them.

These case study anecdotes become meaningful when they are put into the context of patterns of novice teacher development, and the role of mentors. Liz wrote that, 'I still have to think about reflection. It does not come instinctively yet'. She recognised that this was one of the characteristics of more expert teachers. For her then, the video interventions and associated analytical tools prompted and framed her reflection. It also allowed the mentoring to be based on a sophisticated professional relationship, where the student teacher was actively engaged in investigating, understanding and developing her teaching practices.

Significantly Steve referred to their mentoring partnership as one of 'co-enquiry' alluding to its powerful collaborative problem-solving characteristics. Even 'helping with the production of the video CDROM began a process of mutual support'. He continued that it 'added detached objectivity and allowed retrospective reflection' in that 'we could go back and review question types although we might not have been collecting that data at the start of the lesson'. It is thus reasonable to propose that, despite the logistical issues of using video, in this case the effort was re-paid through multiple benefits. To summarise, those pertinent to this case study include:

- ♦ Providing a means for practitioner enquiry as the basis of professional learning;
- ♦ Creating opportunities for the mentoring process to be more collaborative and less hierarchical;
- ♦ Supporting the student teacher in developing expertise in recognising and analysing features of her own practice;
- ♦ Allowing the mentor more space to support the student in investigation, analysis, synthesis and evaluation as the need to describe observed practice is reduced.

Making the link to Postgraduate Professional Development (PPD) for teachers

The first year of the new PGCE course has shown that students can be supported in engaging in enquiry into their practice and that this enhances rather than detracts from their development of the competences and skills needed at the start of their teaching careers. PGCE tutors had some concerns at the beginning of the year that the requirement to complete work for assessment at Masters level may prove too challenging for some graduates. It was felt that the requirement to engage with educational research would handicap those students who did not have a background in social science. The fears were unfounded and the standard of work submitted across the cohort was if anything of a consistently higher standard than in previous years with no bias towards graduates from particular disciplines evident. Feedback from our external examiners has been very encouraging:

- ♦ Students have a broader awareness; clear links are

- made between theory and practice. Course has rigour.
- ♦ Students' levels of understanding, engagement and development as teachers has been improved through the greater integration of research and enquiry.
- ♦ Students use critical and analytical tools more routinely.
- ♦ Enquiry approach creates substantive dialogue between student teachers and school staff about learning.

At the end of the year students were given the option to continue immediately into the second year of the MEd in practitioner enquiry and at the time of writing approx. 30% of the cohort have registered for the MEd with others indicating that they intend to continue their academic study after their induction year.

Changes to the PGCE course have enabled the partnership with schools to develop and for new forms of mentoring to be developed in which links between working with ITE students can be more closely integrated with other initiatives in school such as coaching, leading in learning¹ and the research lesson². Our intentions in developing the course have to a large extent been met and the outcomes in the first year are promising and have done much to allay any concerns amongst university based or school based staff who feared that we might be asking too much of students and mentors. We have made a good start on the task of developing a community of professional learning within ITE.

Biographies

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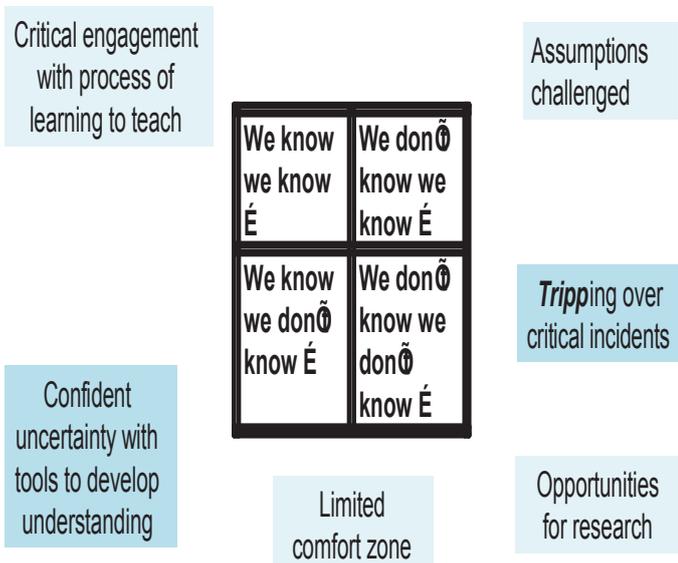


Figure 4: Community of professional learning

9. Identifying the Potential of Handheld Computers with Internet Access to support Initial Teacher Education (ITE).

Jocelyn Wishart, Angela McFarlane, Andy Ramsden: University of Bristol.

Summary

Fourteen Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students studying to become science teachers were given handheld computers (personal digital assistants or PDAs) in a pilot study to assess whether PDAs have the potential to support them in their own teaching and learning, and in communicating with their tutors and colleagues.

This paper discusses the ways in which handheld computers or PDAs were found to support student science teachers during their training. For instance, initial use of the devices was high, we recorded many positive impressions and the devices were well used. Several applications, in particular the use of the calendar, task list, e-mail and internet search facilities were found to be supportive by the students to both their teaching and learning. Other successes were bespoke software programs to record attendance, grades and behaviour, to perform scientific calculations and to provide information from the periodic table of elements. At this point in the course the trainees were moving regularly between school - for observation and teaching practice and university - for subject teaching and reflective discussion sessions.

However, unless the teacher trainees were heavy personal users of the PDAs for activities like online shopping, MSN etc their use dropped during the main 12 week block of teaching practice when they were placed in schools full-time. Some trainees reported that under pressure of time and workload they reverted to use of paper and pen to organise themselves and plan their teaching. Also some schools were unsupportive of the need to synchronize PDAs with a desktop PC to copy trainees' presentations and worksheets to the school network.

The findings are directly relevant to teacher educators whose trainees follow a programme involving lengthy placements in schools as the presenters will highlight electronic communication issues arising from the role of the initial teacher trainee and their school context.

Keywords

PDAs / PGCE science students / VLEs / future developments of PDAs

Background

Naismith et al. (2004) introduced a classification of mobile learning activities where they categorised examples of learning via PDAs and mobile phones that involved children and the general public as well as university and college students, into six areas of learning theory. These are behaviourist, constructivist, situated, collaborative, informal and lifelong, and learning and teaching support. This last area of learning and teaching support is particularly relevant to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) where students move between college and school placement being expected to acquire, decipher and understand a wealth of information, both pedagogical and practical, in the process.

Students of other professions where training also requires access to sizable quantities of information (such as medicine and the law) have already found PDAs useful in that they can deliver information directly to the individual as and when required (Manhattan Research, 2002). The one year course in ITE, the Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) is particularly information rich. In particular, students need access to the documentation of the various UK statutory requirements for schools including the National

Curriculum and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) Schemes of Work and information to supplement their subject knowledge such as science data and teaching resources. Then there is the documentation associated with being on a PGCE course such as timetables, assessment guidance, pupil mark books, lesson observation and lesson plan proformas. Our students are currently supported via a virtual learning environment (VLE) with discussion groups, course documents and links to teaching resources that can be accessed on any computer linked to the internet. However, finding a computer in the teaching practice school, getting logged on and finding media on which to store downloaded information makes regular use of this system very difficult. Yet an earlier study by Ramsden (2005) showed that undergraduate Economics students could successfully use PDAs to access similar course documentation, announcements, e-mail and discussion boards from the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

The use of PDAs may be particularly relevant to the student teacher, who is expected to teach as well as learn, as previous work with teachers using PDAs in

schools (Perry, 2003) has shown that PDAs can be supportive of teaching in that they offer considerable potential to make teachers' management and presentation of information more efficient. One Science teacher reported to Perry that 'I would never willingly go without one now; it is my instantly accessible encyclopaedia, thesaurus, periodic table, diary, register/mark book, world map and even star chart!'

It was therefore concluded that internet enabled PDAs had the potential to support PGCE Science students in:

- ♦ collaborating via the VLE (Blackboard) discussion groups and email;
- ♦ accessing course documentation (on PDA or via Blackboard or via synching);
- ♦ just in time acquisition of knowledge from the web; acquisition of science information from e-books and encyclopaedias;
- ♦ delivering accurate figures for scientific constants and formulae;
- ♦ organising commitments, lesson plans and timetables; recording and analysing lab results;
- ♦ recording pupil attendance and grades;
- ♦ photographing experiments for display and reinforcing pupil knowledge;
- ♦ maintaining a reflective web log (blog) that will allow them to record lesson evaluations and other reflections on their teaching.

A pilot study was set up at the University of Bristol in order to identify where and to what extent the potential for learning and teaching support and collaborative learning (Naismith et al., 2004) can be realised for initial teacher trainees using the current generation of PDAs.

Method

Fourteen students on the Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) one-year teacher training course at the University of Bristol were given handheld computers with mobile phone connectivity and cameras to take with them on teaching practice. The 14 students were given either a Windows Pocket PC or a Palm OS based handheld and four hours of training in its use. The students were chosen from around 20 volunteers from the PGCE cohort of 55, all of whom had a home PC, by selecting randomly from a stratified sample in order to create a mixed group. The final group comprised 4 biologists, 5 chemists and 5 physicists and included 6 males and 8 females. Their teaching practice schools ranged from South Wales to Somerset and included private as well as government maintained schools.

Students received PDAs chosen from the range then available in the UK that could deliver web browsing via the internet, e-mail, SMS texting, word processing, spreadsheet management and picture messaging. These comprised four Tungsten Ws and two Treo 600s running

Palm OS, five Qtek 2020s and 3 i-mates running Pocket PC 2003 (both the latter are SIM free XDA II clones). Mobile phone connectivity was supplied by Vodafone as it had proved reliable in a pilot test. The PDAs were supplied with aluminium protective cases and screen protectors. Separate collapsible keyboards were also originally provided for all the Pocket PC PDAs as they have only the pop-up on screen keyboard and then later for the Treo 600s as the students found their keys too small to write with. Add on cameras were also obtained for the Tungsten Ws as they were the only PDAs without integral cameras.

The students were participant researchers in the project; they reported in at first via a weekly online survey and then later by a twice termly survey. Additionally they were encouraged to reflect on their experiences via a diary of use in the form of a web log or 'blog'. There was a dedicated discussion area on Blackboard, the VLE, should they prefer this method of exchanging information and ideas about the PDA project. Additionally a focus group of all PDA users was organised for the end of each of their two blocks of teaching practice in order to collect impressions and share potential uses face-to-face.

Results and Discussion

At the point that the students had just completed their first four week teaching practice, the results of the weekly online survey indicated that they recognised that the PDA can enable effective learning support and teaching support. Some students found great value in having the PDA for both their practical teaching in the field and in their learning about teaching and the underpinning pedagogy. Others reported that whilst they recognised the potential they had not been successful in using the PDA in the way they had hoped. As the academic year progressed PDA use tailed off with three students dropping out of the study and eight using them for a smaller range of applications.

41 entries out of a possible 56 were made in the online survey during the first four week teaching practice giving a return rate of 73%. Later in the academic year, having swapped to reporting twice termly, 26 entries out of a possible 42 were still made in the online survey making the return rate for the second teaching practice 62%.

Figure 1 shows the applications most frequently reported as being helpful for teaching. In all, 54 suggestions were made in response to this question over the year by the 14 students.

When considering what software was most supportive for actual teaching of lessons the PDA's own calendar or diary software was mentioned often. One student explained why:

Software that was most helpful to actual teaching.	Frequency (n=54)
Calendar/date book for schedule/timetable	10 *
Using the Internet as a resource (Google)	10 *
Attendance Register/mark book/test scorer	7 *
To do / Task list	6
Recording/writing up lesson evaluations	5 *
Calculator	3 *
Writing/noting ideas for lesson plans	3

*used throughout the year

Figure 1. Software that was most helpful to actual teaching

'The calendar and task functionality has been extremely useful. My timetable is surprisingly fluid, with various planning and review meetings being scheduled and re-scheduled - any paper diary would be unreadable and unusable. The task list helps me effectively track and manage the many different tasks that need to be done to survive as a student teacher.'

Also popular for teaching support was the use of the internet, especially the search engine Google, to look up answers to students' (and staff's) questions and getting a response within a minute or two. Examples cited included: 'Where do red robins go in summer?', 'How do starfish reproduce?', searching for up to date information on cloning and finding the telephone number for the local hands-on science centre. One of the students reported that:

'Instant access to the internet has been particularly useful. For example, during one lesson I was able to quickly look up the answer to a pupil's question - this really helped to keep them engaged and interested in the subject matter (in addition to promoting ICT to them).'

Whilst the speed of the GPRS connection was not as fast as a desk top computer it was quicker than finding a free computer in another room. The students reported three downloadable applications as being particularly helpful to science teaching. These were Tiny Red Book¹, a periodic table such as the one associated with Calc98² and a scientific data e-book such as PhysConst.³. Tiny Red Book is a customisable mark book with attendance tracking and a place to record student behaviour. One student particularly benefited from using the attendance tracking to prove a child was absent from their lesson.

Three other students used Excel for this purpose. Students in only their first week of teaching practice reported using the periodic table software successfully to give pupils accurate data almost instantly.

Use of the internet was also the most popular application reported when, as shown in Figure 2, the students were asked to identify the software that was most helpful to their learning on the course. 55 suggestions were made in response to this question over the year by the 14 students.

Again Google was prominent in the students'

Software that was most helpful to their learning.	Frequency (n=55)
Using the Internet as a resource (Google)	14 *
Notes or Word for lesson evaluations and essays	8 *
Notes (note-taking in meetings & lesson observations)	7
To do / Task list	7
Calculator	4*
Calendar/ Diary scheduler	4*
Email	3*
Spreadsheet of audit for QTS standards	2

*used throughout the year

Figure 2. Software that was most helpful to students' learning discussions, its simple site design makes it easy to use on a PDA and the briefings supplied alongside the search results often contained enough information to answer the original query without needing to refer to the sites located. Also popular though was the use of a word-processor or note-recorder either one of which were regularly used to jot down or record information at the point of reception for later processing into assignments or lesson plans. The effectiveness of this activity is reinforced by this student's report:

'During teaching practice I have found myself constantly bombarded with new and noteworthy information (e.g. scientific facts, ideas for teaching approaches, school procedures, evidence for QTS standards etc.). The PDA has allowed me to keep meaningful notes of this information, and structure the information (i.e. file) in a way that allows me to access it easily.'

However, when asked what software was the most use to them as an individual, the students, as shown in Figure 3, focused on the information management

functions of the PDA such as the Task or To Do list, the diary scheduler and the use of email. Another student puts it in plain words:

'I formed a comprehensive To Do list and prioritised well - really useful with everything mounting up.'

However, the Task List was not used throughout the year as the students discovered that putting the tasks into the Calendar instead meant they could also set reminders for themselves. One particular downloadable software application was recommended by the students: OmniRemote which allows the PDA to remotely control the television and other devices in the home. It also enabled one student to operate the school data projector without having to ask the technician for the use of the remote control. Another student downloaded and read e-books. She reported they wouldn't ever take the place of reading books but cut down considerably the amount of books she carried around.

Software that was most helpful to you as an individual.	Frequency (n=58)
Email	12*
To do / Task list	10
SMS/Texting	8*
Calendar/date book for schedule/timetable	7*
Internet for personal use – recipes, maps, shopping	6*
Word for recording lesson evaluations/making notes	3*
Taking photos	3*

*used throughout the year

Figure 3. Software that was most helpful to you as an individual about here (58 responses in total received to this question over the year)

One of the most useful aspects of the PDA is the ability to use it wherever you happen to be, and the carry over into elements of student life beyond the course underlines this. Whilst most use takes place at home or in the school staff rooms, activities such as keeping up to date or even ahead of others in school by accessing the latest educational news on the way in to school and taking photos of local events such as carnivals were reported extremely positively by all the students except one. This student gave up on her PDA, a Treo, early in the main teaching practice citing frustration at the PDA's apparent inability to operate in the way she wished it to as her main reason. It was clear from the students' discussions that those who used the PDA for personal reasons such as taking photos, online shopping and

downloading recipes were more likely to continue to use the PDA to support their teaching and learning.

E-mail was well used but the VLE discussion group on Blackboard was less popular despite the students spending a longer period separate from each other in partner schools. Students reported that Blackboard was 'too slow and clunky'. One student used the PDA to log onto MSN Messenger on a regular basis and even 'chatted' with medical student colleagues during a biology class to gain answers to pupils' questions. Learning support through using web based logs, known as blogs, to encourage reflective practice for recording teaching reflections were even less popular with only one student contributing to one regularly, though a second kept a blog of PDA use for a short while. However, the students reported in focus group discussion that having the word-processor or note recorder on their handheld was actually serving the purpose of recording their reflections on teaching. This enabled them to store their observations for later use in written assignments or in tutorials with their school based mentor or university tutor. There was little desire to put up a blog online for tutors to read and add to in real time.

Not all students continued using the PDAs and, during focus group discussion, two clear themes emerged as to why they were not providing effective learning and teaching support. These were that some students found learning the PDA functions time consuming (this was a particular issue for the non-Windows based devices) and some found having a novel device attention getting in a way that conflicted with their perception of their role as student teacher. The three students who gave up on using the PDA identified the following reasons during exit interviews:

- ♦ Loss of data when battery not recharged for a lengthy period – this happened to at least 3 individuals during vacations and was very disheartening.
- ♦ Lack of time to continue to explore the use of the PDA under the pressure of teaching, planning for teaching and researching for and writing up university assignments.
- ♦ Lack of access to suitable computers within school to synchronise the PDA so that students' files could be made available on the school network or for data projection.
- ♦ Embarrassment at the attention the PDA caused – difficult to handle when still learning how to handle a class.
- ♦ Worry about taking the PDA into school where mobile phones are regularly stolen.
- ♦ Having purchased a laptop and preferring to use that.

Though three of the 14 students returned their PDAs, three used them consistently and regularly throughout the year and eight used them intermittently.

Conclusions

For most of the ITE students the PDA afforded both learning and teaching support (Naismith et al., 2004) whenever they used it. Though not all students used the PDA regularly throughout the academic year there is clear potential for the devices to support both teaching and learning by means of their portability, any time, any place connectivity to stored information and immediacy of communication (JISC, 2005). It was therefore concluded that internet enabled PDAs had the most potential to support PGCE Science students in:

- ♦ just in time acquisition of knowledge from the web;
- ♦ organising commitments, lesson plans and timetables;
- ♦ recording pupil attendance and grades.

They were also useful for:

- ♦ delivering accurate figures for scientific constants and formulae;
- ♦ communicating by text messaging and e-mail.

Of the other initial suppositions, collaborative learning with peers via e-mail was possible but seldom occurred, also the VLE (Blackboard) discussion groups were not well used. However, the students reported in the final focus group that, as they got to know them, they looked to their school based colleagues for learning and teaching support rather than their university peers and tutor. Accessing course documentation on PDA was not popular, the PDA is part of an ICT system involving a home computer to synchronise with and large documents were better read on the desktop screen. Also the concept of 'blogging' was unpopular with students preferring to note reflections on their teaching privately.

Acquiring science information from e-books and encyclopaedias was possible but rare, one student found a general dictionary very useful though. Recording experimental results took place in two ways; by photographing the white board where they were written up and by being entered into Pocket Excel. However, these were individual instances rather than common practice.

Two students trialled photographing experiments for display and reinforcing pupil knowledge and one took photos on a field trip. Though not used much in this study – this area was recommended by the students as worth exploring further. Students were very excited by the potential for use of images of the school environment and from their previous lessons in their teaching but concern about the number and level of permissions required to photograph children meant they were reluctant to take the envisaged pictures. This was just one of several factors in the socio-cultural context of students' PDA use; currently PDAs are rare in most schools. One student found the interest it generated amongst the pupils detracted from her teaching and a

number of them reported a feeling of no-one to share their m-learning⁴ practice with in the classroom. Also an Initial Teacher Training course is an extremely busy time – the students that gave up on the PDAs described the course demands as preventing them from devoting time to necessary exploration of the PDA functionality.

A number of recommendations for future development of PDA use by teachers and trainee teachers arise from this study and include:

- ♦ ensuring 'always on' internet access;
- ♦ investing in a larger community of practice;
- ♦ enabling connection with the classroom data projectors;
- ♦ designing bespoke software that allows both timetabling and personal appointments;
- ♦ allowing synchronisation with the school network computers;
- ♦ more use of video and images;
- ♦ encouraging personal use;
- ♦ focusing on making students comfortable with 'killer applications' such as attendance registers, markbooks and maintaining an online audit of Qualified Teacher Status standards.

Biographies

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2. www.flosim.com/fsi/download.htm
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4. M-learning is the strategy which uses mobile technologies to enhance the learning experience.

10. Enquiry groups: Are they an effective means to develop successful Continuing Professional Development within the primary school? A case study.

Matt Beresford: Stramongate Primary School; Liz Elliott: St. Martin's College.

Summary

This paper presents the initial findings of an ongoing case study into the use of enquiry groups for professional development within a group of primary schools. The three primary schools involved in the study jointly hold training school status.

The context for the study is explored alongside the organisational structure of the training schools and the role of enquiry groups within the structure. Examples of the type of the action research undertaken by the case study enquiry group are given.

The initial findings of the case study indicate that in terms of professional development participants reported feeling: empowered; able to reflect on their practice; able to share thoughts and ideas with colleagues; that it had positively increased contact between schools; that it enabled them feel confident to try something different in their teaching; that it facilitated shared sustained thinking with children.

On a personal level they reported: raised self esteem; a very positive change in their relationships with children; a sense of personal achievement as an action researcher; ownership of their own ideas.

Keywords

Enquiry groups / action research / Continuing Professional Development / practitioner research

Context for the case study

The ongoing case study involves three schools located within a northwest town. The three schools jointly hold training school status and all have two form entry. Two of the schools have attached nursery classes, the third is to open a nursery class in September 2006. Training school status in all schools commenced in September 2004 at the same time as the ongoing case study began.

Starting points for the introduction of enquiry groups as CPD

The vision for the development of the enquiry groups emerged from five principles: that schools were 'Learning Communities'; that this was a way of broadening staff perspectives; that it involved dynamic learning; that it provided professional focused development; that it facilitated action, engagement and classroom development.

Organisational structure of the training schools

The three schools organise themselves using the following structure. There is a managerial group with an overview of all aspects of the training school remit. This group is made up of senior staff and governors from the three schools. There is a training Manager and an Action Plan which is reviewed annually. Various methods and activities are employed to achieve the Action Plan of which one is the use of Enquiry groups for Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Personal involvement of the authors

Liz Elliott from St. Martin's College was invited by the training schools to join in with work with the enquiry groups. There was already a strong relationship with the schools as part of an Initial Teacher Education Partnership and Liz was undertaking research on the use of an enquiry group for staff CPD.

Matt Beresford, an Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) in Assessment for Learning (AfL) from Stramongate School was facilitator for one of the enquiry groups.

Case study approach

It was decided that Liz Elliott would act as a participant observer in the Assessment for Learning Enquiry group and undertake interviews with the enquiry group participants. The Training School documentation would be used to explore aims, intentions and outcomes in relation to the case study group.

The case study enquiry group

Each member of the study group was required to be involved in two twilight and two afternoon sessions throughout the year and to agree to accept the requirements of an engagement contract.

The group agreed that there would be a facilitator – the Advanced Skills Teacher – and participants with a variety of teaching experience with different year groups. There was an expectation of engagement with action research.

and some required reporting outcomes to inform the rest of the training school staff.

Motivation of participants in the case study group

The motivation to join this enquiry groups arose from a variety of starting points. Some had a personal interest in AfL from attending an AfL conference, others had read about AfL or heard other colleagues talking about it. Yet others were motivated by a positive response to an Ofsted inspection and an enthusiastic desire to develop assessment throughout a school.

Action/practitioner research

The group decided to focus on certain areas for their action research so that they had some common areas for comparison. They chose to initially focus on literacy, specifically writing and activities that involved teacher and peer support feedback. It was agreed that at each meeting they would report back their findings and actions to enquiry members

Examples from work in the classroom

The following are examples of some of the work that the enquiry group members engaged with in their classrooms:

1. Encouraging the active engagement of pupils in their own learning by:
 - a) Sharing learning goals;
 - b) Using effective questions;
 - c) Giving effective feedback;
 - d) Utilising self and peer evaluation.
2. Sharing learning goals by:
 - a) Sharing the big picture;
 - b) Sharing learning intentions;
 - c) Using success criteria.
3. Framing the Question-3 different approaches:
 - a) Giving a range of answers;
 - e.g. What does a plant need to grow?
Air, water, light, milk, lemonade, heat, sand, soil?
Include a definite yes, a definite no and some maybes.
 - b) Changing a question into a statement;
 - e.g. Gold is the most precious thing you can have. Agree/disagree.
School is essential. Agree/disagree.
Manners are not needed in 'this day and age'. Agree/disagree.
Glasses make you different.
Agree/disagree.
Warming up wastes valuable PE time.
Agree/disagree
 - c) Finding opposites and asking for an explanation;
 - e.g. Why is this word pronounced sit and this word site (magic e)?
Why does this magnet pick these things

up but not those things?

Why might one circuit work and another not?

Why are these shapes quadrilaterals and these not?

4. Effective Feedback;

Success and improvement method - lots of teacher modelling and gradually relinquishing control to the children.

5. Pupil Self Evaluation;

Self evaluation and evaluating the learning process

Initial findings of case study

In terms of Professional Development participants reported feeling empowered; they felt that the involvement in the enquiry group enabled them to initiate change. Involvement was an aid to reflection; it gave participants time to think about one aspect of their work in more detail and allowed them to share thoughts and ideas with colleagues. There was a feeling that it had positively increased contact between schools and that it enabled the participants to dare to try something different. Significantly, it facilitated shared sustained thinking with children.

In terms of personal development, participants reported feeling that involvement in the enquiry group raised self esteem and was a very positive change in their relationships with children. It gave them a sense of personal achievement as an action researcher and ownership of their own ideas.

Some questions raised by the initial findings of the case study

The research has highlighted the following questions to be explored as the case study continues:

- ♦ Is involvement in the process of practitioner action research as important as the production of change?
- ♦ Do we always need to record what we find?
- ♦ Time scales – how long is appropriate to engage in a particular aspect of action research?
- ♦ Do individual enquiry groups naturally evolve and change and eventually become redundant?
- ♦ How important is the role of the facilitator?
- ♦ How important is the personality of the facilitator?

As the research continues, we will be looking particularly at the question of whether the use of enquiry groups for CPD has any long term effects on the way participant teachers approach teaching and learning, the individual teacher's perspectives on their own personal development and the individual teacher's perspectives on their own professional development.

Biographies

Matt Beresford is an Advanced Skills Teacher specialising in Assessment for learning, working with a range of primary schools across Cumbria Local Authority. He has taught a variety of age ranges in a variety of school settings. His interests lie in effective teaching and learning methodologies and in effective training of teachers and teaching assistants.

Liz Elliott is a Senior Lecturer in Education at St. Martin's College. She has worked in Initial Teacher Education in Higher Education for 14 years. Her particular interests relate to the study of Early Years and also ICT. She is also involved with the development of work with partnership schools in the north west.

11. A Partnership Module Case Study.

Andy Bowles: Leeds Metropolitan University.

Summary

Reflective and reflexive practice had been successful components of our undergraduate primary Initial Teacher Training since 1990. At Leeds-Met we saw QtT (DfES, 2002) as an opportunity to consider ways in which we might embed different approaches to training in our new degree. We wanted to provide more opportunities in the new course for students to reflect on theory and research within the context of teaching.

Keywords

Reflective practice / reflexive practice / minimum competency / professionalism / problem solving

We were able to draw upon the Green Paper for ITT in Europe¹ to support our thinking about basic models of ITT. We think this publication should have a much wider audience among ITT providers. The Green paper considers contemporary models for teacher education used across Europe. It identifies three:

1. Craft Knowledge and the Normal School

The 'normal school' tradition has been very influential in the development of courses for initial teacher training. Schemes typically comprise methodology courses related to subject knowledge, supervised teaching practice in particular schools, rigid modelling and the celebration of experience.

In this model the importance of academic and scientific knowledge and research based knowledge is devalued.

2. Minimum Competency

In England and Wales competency models for assessment have developed in which apprenticeship knowledge is expressed as standards. In 4/98² students were expected to meet national standards and regular inspections were used to ensure quality across providers. A national curriculum for initial teacher training was established with a focus on teaching the basics in a proscribed format with a low priority for theory and research. There are concerns that this model might lead to deprofessionalisation.

3. Professionalism

This model sees teaching as a research based profession. The roots of this model are in the 1960s. This model involves the promotion of learning through validated practices. Teaching involves conscious and sub-conscious decision-making. Teachers are seen as autonomous, competent and critical intellectuals. They are able to adopt new transformations of research based knowledge concerned with teaching and learning. This model has challenges but has been influential in teacher education and is central to many models of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Many professions have some sort of basic standards on which practice is constructed.

approach to teacher training. In this model, module time is allocated to collaborative teaching of small groups of children in a partnership school following University based tuition. The model has developed from work in a module in a History route in which students have to lead primary children through an oral history experience. It draws upon work at the University which preceded 4/98. The teaching and learning draws on reflective practice which is embedded in our CPD programme.

The case study is concerned with a module, 'Extending the Core', which seeks to promote students' knowledge, understanding and skills in inclusion issues through teaching core subjects in the primary school.

The Module: Extending the Core

This level 3 module of approximately 150 hours tuition time included university-based and school-based tuition. The students involved are in their third year on a 4 year undergraduate scheme with different specialist routes. This is a module for all routes. Students also study a professional studies module on inclusion issues. Assessment is through a report and an assessed presentation. From the University perspective the module and the associated school based approach had the following aims and objectives.

Aims for the Project:

- ♦ To develop a broader range of differing types of student experiences in schools;
- ♦ To raise the quality of student learning in phase 2 of the course;
- ♦ To promote new ways of working in partnership with schools.

Objectives for the Project:

- ♦ To develop student knowledge and understanding of inclusion issues;
- ♦ To develop student teaching skills in working with small groups of children with particular needs;
- ♦ To develop student understanding and skills in using reflective practice to inform their professional work;
- ♦ To further develop the evidence base for the standards with a focus on 1.7;

Case Study

The focus for this study is the use of a mixed mode

- ◆ To develop students skills in synthesising theory/research and professional practice.

Management: who is involved

One provider is involved, Leeds Metropolitan University, and seven schools in the region. These schools were selected as they demonstrated good practice in terms of inclusivity. There are 66 students involved.

The module is managed by a module tutor and the teaching team involves five tutors teaching core subjects (including one who is also a part time literacy consultant from the Local Education Authority), as well as two tutors who have expertise in the field of inclusion, citizenship and global perspectives. Additional tutors support the school based work. Seven school based tutors are involved in the planning, assessment and evaluation stages of the module. Each school has a school based tutor and an assigned University tutor who is either a module tutor or an additional tutor. The head of the Centre for Research is also involved to advise on the use of the project as a basis for our research programme and tutor reflective practice.

Programme: What the training in schools involves

- ◆ The university and school-based tutors met at the university in December 2002 to discuss the model, the module and the programme and to agree on an inclusion issue in an aspect of core English/mathematics/science to be addressed by the students in each school;
- ◆ Students receive tuition in the module content, drawing on the expertise of university tutors as well as teachers from the partnership schools;
- ◆ Students are allocated to schools, with between seven and fourteen students working in each of the seven schools. The model uses two students to about 4/5 children;
- ◆ University tutors visit school-based tutor in school to arrange the series of visits;
- ◆ School based tutors facilitate visits through selecting children, providing resources and accommodation for teaching;
- ◆ Students and University based tutors visit school to be briefed by the school -based tutor;
- ◆ Students plan and teach during approximately four half days in the school;
- ◆ At the end of the module, students present their 'case studies' to University and school -based tutors who collaborate in assessment. This is linked with an assignment;
- ◆ Each 'stake holder' has been briefed about responsibilities.

Reflective Practice

University tutors led the students in critical incident analysis in school following each teaching session.

Students and tutors used a developed critical incident schedule and a writing frame. It is argued that critical incident analysis enables professionals to recognise the ways in which personal beliefs and values influence choices made at both the conscious and subconscious level during episodes of professional practice. This encourages the use of a much wider evidence base. Critical incident analysis is in use in many aspects of professional development and training.

Key Ingredients of a Successful Model

We think this model has key features which promote the development of confidence, knowledge understanding and skills in all stakeholders.

Here they speak for themselves:

- ◆ Provides Positive Outcomes for all Stakeholders - Student motivation and learning is extended, children with particular needs receive a very high level of attention in a small group and partner schools are presented with an opportunity to experience new ideas.
 - 'Working with students in small groups is a luxury for the children in school.' School based mentor.
- ◆ Immediate juxtaposition of theory and practice - The school based work enables to student to consider particular theory introduced in the University based component in the context of school. This promotes analysis, synthesis and evaluation of theory and practice.
 - 'I was really thrilled and relieved when I noticed what happened when I put a lot of expression into reading the story. I felt that the children were really interested and enjoying listening, unaware they were developing their listening and thinking skills. Effective story telling as the National Oracy Strategy demonstrated is influential in developing such skills.' Student
 - 'The University-based part of the module gave me the relevant information to teach EAL³ children e.g. you cannot go straight into context reduced learning, but you must begin with context embedded learning to develop learner cognition.The school-based side showed me that, yes this does work when put into practice.' Student
- ◆ Facilitates ownership among students - Students are encouraged to be creative in their approach to the teaching in contrast to following a school or national scheme. This encourages more ownership of their teaching.
 - 'An excellent opportunity to support our learning as a teacher.' Student
- ◆ Promotes independence in student learning - The module is front loaded with broadly based tuition in whole year lectures. Once specific topics have been

allocated, students then have to research and plan in groups. This fosters independence.

'Actually going into school allowed us to choose and area of inclusion that interested us and being able to research and plan teaching ideas for a more focussed group.' Student

- ◆ Uses problem solving approach - Students are encouraged to see the school based component as problem solving and this encourages reflective thinking and decision making. Students are encouraged to see errors as virtuous and this develops confidence. PBL (Problem-Based Learning) and the professionalism model are closely related.

'I now believe that enhancing talk in an unthreatening manner i.e. when children are drawing is extremely beneficial to learning and the development of their communication skills.' Student

- ◆ Fosters team building and collaborative approaches to teaching and learning - Students often work in groups at the University but traditional school experience can leave students feeling isolated and under constant scrutiny. This model provides them with the sort of collaborative experiences that are going to be central as new kinds of para educationalists are employed in the schools. Concerns about discipline and control are not central to the experience.

'The clearly focused group work was very important. Here students supported, helped and encouraged each other. In school you are part of a team. Students clearly welcomed the opportunity to work in pairs and observe each other.' School based tutor.

'I found going into school interesting as this is the only module, other than school experience, that gives the opportunity to interact with schools I have not previously worked with, enabling me to look into issue not encountered earlier.'

Student

- ◆ Assessment is based on an assignment and not on practical teaching - In school traditional experience the emphasis is based on meeting the standards. Here student ability to reflect and learn is critical and therefore they are encouraged to be creative and risk take.

'We now feel we should have adopted a more early years approach to teaching in this context.'

Student

- ◆ Uses minimal resources in both University and school -Schools provide minimal resources and merely facilitate the work. More tutors are required for the school based work if a large number of schools are involved. No transfer of resources occurs. Use of a bigger team of tutors requires good communication about all aspects Overall schools see benefits rather than costs with this model.

'I would not say it really involved any extra work—————Just a little support with organisation.' School based tutor.

- ◆ Provides a context to address and meet TTA⁴, QtT Standards - Although the practical teaching is not formally assessed the model enables students to continue to be reflective and reflexive about their professional development and provide evidence of addressing the QtT Standards.

'Through reflecting on the standards and my comments, I used to believe I would not make a good teacher for EAL. However, due to this module I no longer think so. I am actually thinking of applying for a job in an EAL School.'

Student

- ◆ Ensures a quality learning experience for both students and children -The quality of learning for both the children and the students is consistently high. Students provide a rich learning environment for developing literacy with small groups of children and are able to enter discourses about literacy and language development through reflective practice. They provide learning contexts and opportunities which schools themselves find it difficult to facilitate and make a difference to children's knowledge and understanding and their own ability to articulate their professional development.

'Very positive experience to see the sort of confidence this approach generates in both students and children.' School based tutor.

'Really had to think about my own teaching — quite scary.' Student

'A really good opportunity to work in schools again; keeps me inspired to be a teacher. Really worthwhile as I feel we have made a difference to these children.' Student

- ◆ Embeds partnership involvement in course development, monitoring and evaluation - Schools are much more involved in planning, developing and assessing in this model. We feel the module presents opportunities for developing more shared understandings and ownership of ITT among all stakeholders.

'We now have a much clearer idea of what happens at the University.' School based tutor

- ◆ Provides opportunities for students to generate evidence they are meeting QtT and encourages ownership of CPD - Students need to be encouraged to own their professional development. This is an important feature of joining our community of practice.

'This work provided many opportunities for thinking about and recording standards.' Student

QtT (DfES, 2002)

We think this module is closely associated with the

development of Professional Values and Practice and enables students to address and meet 1.7 but also standards associated with knowledge and understanding and teaching can be addressed through this approach.

References

DfES (2002) *Qualifying to teach: Professional Standards for Qualified Teacher Status and Requirements for Initial Teacher Training* (London, DfES TTA).

APPENDIX

Critical Analysis Instrument

Students complete a and b and then tutor leads through c. Complete d later.

SECTION A

You and Your Critical Incident:

Your Name

School

Date

Time

1. Choose a critical episode:

This would be something that stands out for you, e.g. a successful or unsuccessful teaching/learning incident.

2. Describe the incident to include:

When and where it happened? (time of day, location and social context)

What actually happened? (who said or did what)

What you were thinking and feeling at the time and just after the incident?

What have you learned? Make notes.

SECTION B

Identifying and interrogating your own Values and Beliefs

Interrogate your description to include:

- ♦ How did you interpret the incident?
- ♦ Why did this incident stand out?
- ♦ What was going on?
- ♦ Were there different levels of 'behaviour' or I activity?
- ♦ Did you bring personal bias or a particular mindset to the event?
- ♦ Could you have interpreted this event differently from another point of view? How
- ♦ What can you learn from this episode?
- ♦ What can you do to progress a resolution of the problem/s it suggests

SECTION C

Sharing Interpretations and Perspectives.
Make notes here.

- ♦ Share your response with the whole group or a sub group.
- ♦ Share your account of the episode
- ♦ Discuss your interpretation. Other group members to identify and suggest other interpretations.
- ♦ Modify your analysis, where necessary, in the light of peer suggestion, advice, perspective (make notes)
- ♦ Identify any theoretical perspective from the tuition on the course, which might contribute to your analysis

Word process a report for sections D and E. Use the evidence and your notes. The report does not have to be lengthy (1 or 2 pages will usually be enough). Use subheadings and bullet points to list and organise your thoughts and feelings. Refer to the standards in Section E. File your notes in your appendix and hand in a disc with your two reports with your assignment.

SECTION D

Developing Reflectivity through Synthesising the Evidence

Describe the incident and the context in which it occurred. Make reference to the teaching, learning and social contexts.

'My activity involved.....We were.... In the group.....

- a. How did you interpret this incident?
'At first I thought.....
- b. What thoughts and feelings did you bring to the situation?
'I thought thatI usually feel.....
- c. How did your colleagues interpret the situation you described and what do you think now?
'Robert said he thought.....I agree/disagree and now think.....
- d. Try to generalise a meaning.
'This is an example of how children.....
- e. Draw upon the taught course to widen the evidence base as you interpret the situation.
'This is an example of what Vygotsky described as scaffolding.....
'The Primary strategy advises.....here.....
'Chris Belcher told us.....about.....and I read.....
- f. Identify your position now and what you might do next time

If I come across this situation again I think I would now because....although I could.....This reflects.....

SECTION E

Being Reflexive through Considering your Professional Development and the QTT Standards.

Summarise your learning. Use the TTA standards to comment on your learning.

I used to think that some children did not listen to my explanations but I now realise I both need to be more clear and always check they understand.

This would be particularly important for children who have some of the symptoms of ADHD. (QTT 3.3.4)

Prompts for tutors to use during Section C of the Critical Incident Review.

Use when and if they struggle

Always ask and ask why again to promote reflection (The Socratic method)

What did not happen but could have happened?

If it happened why did it not happen again?

What was good about what happened?

What was not good about what happened?

What was interesting about what happened?

What might have happened?

What could have happened?

What did you choose to do that?

What else might have happened and how could you make it happen?

What do you feel about what happened? Why?

What does what you feel tell you about yourself?

What does this tell you about your own attitudes and values?

Why did you not choose to do that?

What could have happened if you had made that choice?

What is the professional dilemma in this situation?

How did you resolve it?

What personal values and beliefs influenced your resolution to this dilemma?

What might you do next time?

Footnotes

1. <http://tntee.umu.se/publications/greenpaper/greenpaper.pdf>
2. www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/guidanceonthelaw/4_98
3. English as an Additional Language
4. Now TDA

12. The involvement of Creative Practitioners in the Primary BEd Initial Teacher Training programme at the University of Chester.

Andy Hamill: University of Chester; Robert Meadows: Creative Partnerships.

Summary

This paper examines the introduction of a creativity course to the Primary undergraduate ITE programme at a UK university. The creativity course benefited from the involvement of Creative Practitioners from Creative Partnerships Merseyside. Course evaluations, interviews, observations of teaching and evaluations of key events by the community of tutors, creative practitioners, mentors and student teachers were used to reflect on the process and impact of the collaboration. The authors conclude that the contribution of creative practitioners can be effective. The development of a shared understanding of creative learning through the planning process can generate tangible benefit to all concerned and lead to effective practice. Creativity research is applied to this ITE community and implications for practice are examined.

Keywords

Creativity / creative practitioners / primary Initial Teacher Education / communities of practice / student teachers / mentors.

Introduction

Changes in the requirements for Initial Teacher Education courses in the UK (DfES, 2002) enabled a reappraisal of specialist subjects provided in undergraduate teacher training programmes. As a result a new creativity theme was introduced at the University of Chester. The introduction of the theme coincided with interest in teacher education arising from the NACCCE report. The NACCCE¹ report (1999) acknowledged that we need to train a teaching force which recognises and promotes creative and cultural education. One of that report's proposals for development was that teacher training programmes should work in partnership with creative and cultural organisations and practitioners and that such partnerships should work together to investigate practical ways of training teachers. Through the DfES/DCMS² funded 'Widening Participation' programme, Creative Partnerships Merseyside (CPM) became involved with the design, delivery and evaluation of the creativity theme.

There were four key strands to the project:

- ◆ University of Chester and Creative Partnerships Merseyside (CPM) tracked a cohort of Year 1 BEd teacher trainees during the pilot year of the 'Creativity' course;
- ◆ Creative Practitioners were invited to make a significant contribution to the 'Creativity' course;
- ◆ Creative practitioners working with HEI lecturers piloted a CPD (Continuing Professional Development) programme for school-based mentors;
- ◆ The University undertook additional observations of the Year 1 BEd students' first teaching placement that focused upon both the trainees' understanding of learning and teaching for creativity and how schools 'mentor for creativity'.

Context

As numbers of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students reduced over a period of years, the number of specialist subjects available to ITE students applying for the four year primary BEd programme at the University of Chester was reduced in order to maintain viable subject groups. Circular 02/02³ no longer specified compulsory specialist study and a decision was taken to; create three additional cross-curricular themes that would make students attractive to future employers in the primary education sector; and to enable the institution to draw on high quality candidates committed to primary teaching from a wider range of subject backgrounds. As a result four themes were developed and validated; Communication, Human and Environmental Science, Creativity and Early Years. Students elected to pursue one theme comprising four 30 CATS⁴ points modules: two in year one and two in year two.

The Creativity theme modules were entitled:

- ◆ What is Creativity?
- ◆ Creative People
- ◆ Creativity in the Curriculum
- ◆ Developing Creativity

Creative Practitioners made a significant contribution to the 'Creativity' theme, working in partnership with University lecturers. The opportunity to evaluate the impact of the theme and the role of partnership working led to a consideration of appropriate instruments.

It was decided that observation of the students in school placements at the end of the first year would be undertaken. In order to ensure that the school mentors were familiar with the creativity theme and understood the type of partnership working that the students had experienced, a mentor training event was planned.

Creative practitioners were also involved in the planning and piloting of this innovative CPD programme for those school-based mentors who had been selected to work with the 'Creativity group' in schools.

Evaluation

Evaluation was undertaken on several levels involving the key stakeholders in the project – student teachers (n=28), mentors (n=9) and creative practitioners (n=12). The aim was to monitor the impact of the course upon the trainees' understanding of creativity and how schools' 'mentor for creativity'. The instruments that were used to inform the evaluation were standard university module evaluations, interviews, observations of teaching and evaluations of key events by the community of tutors, creative practitioners, mentors and student teachers.

There were three initial baseline questions for student teachers. They were asked:

- ♦ to notate themselves on a 'creative continuum' to reveal their perceptions about their personal creativity;
- ♦ what teaching style encourages creative learning;
- ♦ what circumstances enable pupils to engage in creative learning?

In response, 70% of the trainees placed themselves in the highest quartile of the creative continuum. There was, for these trainees at the very start of their professional development, a very eclectic range of responses to a question that focused upon the conditions conducive to stimulating creativity: 40% defined creativity as having new and exciting ideas; 20% saw it as coming up with solutions to problems and making dull things interesting; different from the norm; and 30% defined creativity in terms using the imagination.

Students' perceptions of the most important teaching styles for encouraging creative learning included:

- ♦ involve talking and group discussion;
- ♦ letting the children be involved in decision-making;
- ♦ being creative in one's teaching;
- ♦ pupils to use their own initiative.

When student teachers were invited to describe circumstances that enabled pupils to engage in creative learning, they suggested the following:

- ♦ open discussions;
- ♦ not having over-defined objectives;
- ♦ appropriate and easily accessible resources;
- ♦ working with a range of materials;
- ♦ working in groups;
- ♦ encouragement;
- ♦ lots of space;
- ♦ using the unfamiliar;
- ♦ 'no pressure'.

Using key behaviours suggested by research to promote

and foster creativity (Cropley, 2001; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997), a set of structured Interview questions for school-based mentors was developed.

The key questions were:

- ♦ how the trainee was introduced to a class of pupils;
- ♦ in what circumstances, if any, would the mentor intervene during the delivery of a lesson;
- ♦ how they felt the trainees' good practice should be/was rewarded;
- ♦ the flexibility of the school and mentor to innovative ideas;
- ♦ the extent to which the mentor enjoyed the mentoring process.

In response, all the mentors avoided the use of the word 'trainee' when introducing to the class and all would intervene if there was a serious health and safety issue but encourage 'safe' risk taking. It was seen to be important to 'establish a working pattern that means the mentor remains part of the class'. Most mentors were keen to reward students' good practice with public praise and validate their work by sharing it with other colleagues. All mentors stated that the school would be flexible with regard to timetabling but calendared events were described as sacrosanct. The majority of mentors confessed to enjoying the mentoring process.

In addition to the system in place for lesson observation during the school placement, observations of teaching were carried out on a sample of the creativity students (n=10) at the end of their first year. The structured observation looked for the occurrence of a range of creative opportunities in the lessons taught by the student teachers. The percentage of lessons observed which displayed each creative opportunity is listed below.

Children challenged and curious	90%
Children explore and generate new ideas	80%
Children participate in a creative experience	80%
Children identify problems and ask questions	100%
Children work in teams effectively	60%
Children evaluate their own learning	80%
Children reflect on experience	60%
Children presented with creative ideas	90%
Children have the opportunity to communicate cultural and creative needs	80%

For the Creative Practitioners involved in the project, feedback was elicited from evaluation of the events that they had helped to plan and deliver.

The key benefit articulated was that it provided an opportunity to discuss issues of bringing creativity into schools and 'particularly from the perspective of possibilities rather than limitations'. The experience of working with student and serving teachers was described as 'positive and inspiring'. The creative practitioners, who

had all undergone an advanced skills course for creative practitioners organised by CPM, valued the opportunity to 'question their own artistic and pedagogic practices' and analyse their own processes. The value of working with questioning professionals from other disciplines which necessitated the examination of their own practice and justifying its place in education was also seen as a positive benefit of the project.

Discussion

Much of the activity in this project and indeed the Creativity Theme itself has been influenced by models of creativity and studies of creative people undertaken at the end of the twentieth century (Gardner, 1993; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Cropley, 2001; Craft, 2001; NACCCE, 1999). Models derived from ethnographic studies (Gardner, 1993; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) can be applied to educational contexts at both primary – student teachers and their pupils - and tertiary – mentors / tutors and their student teachers if democratic views of creativity are adopted (NACCCE, 1999). Gardner (1993) describes a three part model comprising the creative person, the domain and the field; where the domain is the sphere of activity concerned and the field describes the other exponents of the art. When applied to ITE the tutors, mentors and teachers make up the field and the creative domain is the art of teaching. Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) analysis of the contribution that the field appeared to make to the lives of the 91 creative people that he interviewed, may shed light on the conditions that we need to replicate if we are to nurture and sustain creative teachers for the future. He describes seven major elements that the field and the social milieu, contribute to the nurturing of creative people:

- ♦ Training;
- ♦ Expectations: showing faith in the abilities of the creative person; setting high expectations and taking excellence for granted;
- ♦ Resources: the field acts as a resource for the creative person; ensuring that both material and intellectual resources are widely available;
- ♦ Recognition: the field helps to validate the identity of the creative person and encourage them to continue working in the domain;
- ♦ Hope: that there is purpose to their work and that they will be able to work in the domain;
- ♦ Opportunity: providing opportunities to practice their art or profession and display talent are often in the gift of the field;
- ♦ Rewards: both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards leading to public recognition help to sustain the intellectual challenge of working in the domain and the interest of the creative person.

Mentors who treat the student teachers in their care as burgeoning creative practitioners fulfil the role of the field. The responses of mentors suggest that even at a

time when the notion of what it means to be a teacher is described in measurable competences, good mentors continue to model key elements that contribute to the nurturing of creative people.

One of the five major challenges identified in the NACCCE Report (1999) was to ensure 'good quality mentoring for students while in schools'. The collaborative events have had a significant impact on the student teachers and mentors in deepening their understanding of creative learning and teaching and working in partnership. The challenge is to embed the type of work with creative practitioners undertaken with both student teachers and mentors in ITE programmes. The stark warning contained in the NACCCE report suggests that the likelihood of student teachers, who have not experienced the possibilities of working with creative practitioners in ITE, developing this aspect of their practice in their future careers is slight;

'...if the door to these partnership opportunities is not opened for teachers during teacher training, it may remain locked forever, to the detriment of the pupils' (NACCCE 1999:180).

The focus of the community of practitioners, mentors and student teachers on the nature of creativity itself has been revealing. The recognition within the community that mentors, tutors and student teachers are equally creative practitioners has helped to confirm that research relating to creative people and creativity-fostering teachers (Cropley, 2001) pertains to ITE contexts. Similarly, there is more to effective mentoring and creative coaching than purely being personally creative. In the same way that creative teachers do not necessarily foster creativity in the children (Fryer, 1996 in Cropley, 2001), creative mentors can have a debilitating effect on student teachers as the creativity of the mentor may dominate. It is equally true that in a setting where a mentor's creativity is subdued it is unlikely that student teacher's creativity would thrive (op.cit.).

Endnote

The project has confirmed for the community that the contribution of creative practitioners to both ITE and mentor training can be effective when time is dedicated to planning and developing a shared understanding of notions of creativity and creative people. The research has much to teach us and applies with little interpretation to the ITE community. Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) catalogue of factors, based on his research, which can contribute to the stifling of a creative talent, serve as a warning:

Boring schools, insensitive mentoring, rigid work environments, too many pressures and bureaucratic requirements can turn an exciting intellectual adventure into a chore and extinguish the sparks of creativity.
(Csikszentmihalyi 1997:335)

Biographies

Andy Hamill is currently the co-ordinator of the Creativity Theme at the University of Chester. He is also a programme leader for BA (Hons.) Early Years education and e-learning co-ordinator for the School of Education. He joined, the then, Chester College in 1990 having previously taught in primary schools in Ellesmere Port and Runcorn. He has worked for the British Council as a consultant on education reform programmes in the Middle East. His research interests include the way that young children learn and the curriculum areas of Design and Information and Communications Technology. He has published teachers' books. He has been an infant school governor for 12 years and is a member of the Higher Education Academy.

Robert Meadows is an arts and educational consultant. His work for Creative Partnerships has involved the regional co-ordination of the 'Creativity and Teacher Training' programme in the North West. He has worked in schools, HEIs and for advisory bodies in the field of health, heritage, education and the arts.

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13. The Partnership Team: a new initiative in collaborative practice between one Higher Education Institution and the Local Authority.

Sue Field and Kerry Jordan-Daus: Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU).

Summary

This paper is based around our early experiences as an innovative 'partnership team' established at Canterbury Christ Church University in September 2005. We took the opportunity provided by the Escalate Conference to review and analyse our roles within our own Faculty of Education and within the wider educational community in a large Local Authority (LA). Our analysis includes consideration of the early issues arising from the work on a mentor validation project as an illustration of some of the tensions arising as the Partnership Team establishes itself.

Keywords

LA (Local Authority) clusters / mentoring / standards / recognition / partnership / professional identity

Context

Kent is a one of the largest counties in the UK with a population of 1.3 million. Surprisingly, to many people, the average household income in Kent is below the average for the south east taken as a whole. Although west Kent has a reputation for affluence, there are still a number of deprived areas, and east Kent has significant issues regarding social deprivation and major areas in need of regeneration. At the same time, housing in most areas of Kent is very expensive, due to its proximity to London, which creates problems in recruitment and retention of key workers including teachers. The LA thus faces problems in terms of scale (over 100 secondary and 468 primary schools) and raising standards.

The panoramic political context within which the role of the Partnership Team at Christ Church University was conceived is as follows. The Bologna Agreement of 1999 saw significant EC developments regarding partnership. This has had influence practice in the UK, which has seen the development of the reform agenda of 'Every Child Matters' (DfES, 2004), the Children Act¹, the Work Force Strategy (DfES, 2005) and 10 year Child Care strategy². From an LA perspective, the Chief Executive has been keen to look to America (New York, Seattle, Chicago) for educational practices and trends, and to this end, fifty senior managers went to USA in June 2005. Workforce remodelling is taking place across the authority.

The LA has recently been divided into six geographical Areas, each with an Area Education Officer (AEO), who reports to an Assistant Director of Education with 'operational' responsibility. The LA advisory service functions separately, with a distinct line management structure. There are in total 23 clusters of schools within the Areas, each with a Local Education Officer (LEO) responsible for the co-ordination of LA policy, the identification of local priorities and the development of a cluster action plan to address county and local priorities. Simultaneously with this re-structuring, the LA was

adjusting its systems in response to the 'Every Child Matters' agenda and moving towards Children's Trust³ status. The clustering arrangements were also seen as a suitable vehicle for delivering the requirements of 'Every Child Matters'.

During the same period, regular meetings were taking place between the Chief Executive of the (then) LEA and the Dean of Education at CCCU to develop closer partnerships between the Faculty of Education and the authority. The Faculty of Education at CCCU is one of the largest in the UK, offering the full range of routes into teaching, plus extensive Professional Development provision and consultancy to schools and LAs. Generally speaking, much of this provision had been developed in isolation, so that schools were liaising with different Departments for different areas of provision.

It was felt that creating a team of six experienced tutors who would liaise with LA officers in each Area, and draw together the various initiatives and activities, would improve the relationship with the authority as a whole, broaden the conception of partnership and position the Faculty advantageously with respect to the emerging schools agenda.

The Partnership Team Leaders (PTLs), who were appointed as a result of competitive interviews, represent a wide range of knowledge and experience, in primary and secondary school settings, in quality management and assurance, Initial Teacher Education, professional development, mentor training and advanced study in mentoring, and consultancy.

The first six months of the Partnership Team's operation have raised a series of challenging questions about the nature of partnership work between the University, the LAs and schools. This raises questions about the value and identity of our role, which have also helped us analyse our roles and the current context in which we

work more deeply. This paper seeks to explore some of these challenges and tensions.

The Developing Professional Identity of the Partnership Team

The policy reforms as outlined above have, to varying degrees, affected teachers' professional work. As such, professional work can be seen to have been in some way influenced by politics. Of course, these policies are ideologically driven, and in this sense it can be argued that the work of teachers, intending teachers, those in Higher Education and all those involved in education takes place within an ideologically influenced political arena. The work of the Partnership Team is deeply embedded within this politicised context at University, LA and national level.

The Partnership Team has been established during a time of change, both from a national policy perspective and also from an LA perspective. Within this national and local education system there is emphasis upon goals, targets and, most importantly, output (Whitty, 2003). In this 'evaluative state' (Neave, 1988), it can be argued that 'policy drivers' (Bryan, 2004) impact upon the potential work of the Partnership Team. Key policy drivers that influence the work of the team are:

- ♦ National educational policies and initiatives (such as 'Every Child Matters', where a multi-agency drive is causing PTLs to operate across departments and with the Faculty of Health in providing new professional development opportunities);
- ♦ The structure within Kent LA, where PTLs aim to work with AEOs and LEOs, in order to gain access to school clusters. These officers have key roles to play with their clusters and as such will have their own political agendas;
- ♦ Departments within the Faculty: PTLs work across a range of departments. The home department of the PTL is significant in the way in which they conceive of their work, and the expertise they bring to any given context when working with outside agencies.

These key policy drivers are powerful. National education policy, LA hierarchy (and policy within that structure), clusters and their policies, and Departmental priorities come together in a complex cocktail of possibilities in relation to the Partnership Team. It is significant to add here that members of the Partnership Team themselves hold deep levels of epistemological orientation and are 'committed to elaborate...sets of beliefs about what they are doing' (Carr, 1998). This interplay between policy drivers and the personal beliefs and values of individual PTLs in some way contributes to the strategic development of the team. Of course, this can cause uncertainty when faced with a new and developing role. PTLs are all experienced tutors in Higher Education, with a wealth of teacher knowledge.

Additionally, PTLs have experience as 'gate-keepers' to the profession, working across undergraduate, post-graduate, masters and doctoral programmes. The struggle to develop a secure professional PTL identity is in direct relation to the identification of specific policy drivers. At present, the parallel cultures of the PTL's home Department, and the struggle to identify a specific policy driver have the potential to cause feelings of de-professionalisation (Maclure, 1999, Apple, 1987, McCulloch, 2000).

It could be argued that as a team, the PTLs have sought to move from a position of 'Old Professionalism' (Troman, 1996), where we worked in a given hierarchy, with established rules of engagement, to a form of 'New Professionalism' (Troman, 1996), where one works in a flexible team with flattened hierarchies, and in collaboration with outside agencies. It is helpful to view the Partnership Team as an attempt to embody New Professionalism. Research by Olsen et al. (1999) found that the people most needed within a 'post-Fordist' economy were flexible, creative, intuitive, enthusiastic, committed and able to solve problems. The execution of these talents within a TDA-influenced, politically driven environment is certainly a challenge! Sachs (2001) helps us to understand the complexities at play here with the formation of a PTL professional identity. Whilst undertaking a study of professional identity in Australia during a period of change in government policy and educational restructuring, Sachs identified the emergence of two competing discourses in relation to professionalism. On the one hand, 'managerialist professionalism' was the discourse which was reinforced by policies, with emphasis upon accountability and effectiveness. 'Democratic professionalism' on the other hand was a discourse which emerged from within the profession itself. It would seem that, at present, the Partnership Team is caught between both of these discourses, at a stage in its development where its own voice is not yet confident enough to be heard.

The identity of the Partnership Team, then, is complex and evolving. Wenger (1998) offers five dimensions of identity that are helpful when considering the struggles experienced in the development of this new role:

1. Identity as negotiated experiences
2. Identity as community membership
3. Identity as learning trajectory
4. Identity as nexus of multimembership
5. Identity as a relation between the local and the global

These are dimensions to which we will return as we continue to evaluate our emerging identity as a team.

Ideologically, the Partnership Team would wish to position itself more within the democratic tradition than the managerialist paradigm. However the presence of

these two key discourses within the local education community can be seen to have impacted significantly upon attempts by the team to establish early partnership work within the LA school cluster system.

What are the factors which impact on the development of successful partnerships?

Firstly there needs to be a shared sense of purpose and a willingness to work together based on the mutual recognition of need (Gallacher, 1995). It is evident that this recognition existed at the strategic level within both the Faculty and the LA, but was it equally recognised by the other participants, for example the LEOs and AEOs?

Seller and Hannay's (2000) study of school-university collaboration in Canada reminds us that sustainable partnerships are rarely maintained where the orientations of the collaborating institutions are different. For the AEOs and LEOs the key issues may be those of the standards agenda, and of the administrative implementation of national and county policies. The purposes of the University, and thus ultimately of the Partnership Team members, are less oriented to these kinds of relatively short term outcomes. The skills and knowledge base within the Faculty is centred around belief in the importance of critical reflection on practice to support teacher development at all levels. This may be a very different orientation to that of the AEOs and LEOs who are also the gatekeepers to the school clusters. Mutual recognition of need is thus our first area of tension.

We know through experience in ITE (Initial Teacher Education), that even where 'partnerships' might originally have been imposed from without, it is possible to develop a shared sense of purpose and commitment. The relationship between University Departments of Education and schools has now been developed and refined over more than a decade. Those HEI colleagues who were involved in the initial attempts to establish meaningful relationships with schools in ITE may recall resistance to the notion of partnership training, and indeed resentment on the part of some schools about being 'forced' to engage in more work. (Possibly some colleagues may feel this point of view still exists in some quarters!). However there are now many successful training partnerships between individual schools and HEIs (Higher Education Institutions), which extend well beyond the 'servicing' of the award of QTS (Qualified Teacher Status).

These partnerships have grown, over time, to be based on mutual trust and respect – two more of the necessary conditions for effective, sustainable partnerships. They also share at least one central and clearly defined aim (in relation to the development of suitable qualified and experienced new teachers) which is another pre-requisite

for partnership activity. To a limited extent, they fulfil Wenger's claim that 'even when a community of practice arises in response to some outside mandate, the practice evolves into the community's own response to the mandate' (Wenger, 1998:80). Sustainable relationships developed over time appear to be another key element in successful partnership work. Given the short time the Partnership Team have been established this is obviously an issue, but time alone will not support the development of effective relationships without the other pre-requisites being met.

Speaking at a conference for LA head teachers and officers in November 2005, John West-Burnham outlined the characteristics of successful clusters and cluster leadership. One significant factor among many is that of viable size. Within Kent, geographically based clusters can be as large as 42 schools: West-Burnham argues that seven appears to be a 'magic number' in order to establish the shared aims and values and mutual trust which would lead to the sustainable development of a learning culture. This has provided us with another area of tension in that, even if a greater degree of shared understanding develops with individual AEOs and LEOs, the LA cluster system itself may not provide the right conditions for effective partnership working.

Where we have been more successful in developing new initiatives with individual schools or groupings of schools, or with LA staff, these have largely been outside the formal cluster system. These successful initiatives fulfil the key requirements for effective partnership work which are not currently evident in our relationships with the LA clusters. They are based on previously established relationships of trust, they tend to be relatively small scale in terms of numbers of schools involved, and they are based on shared aims and values.

Retrospectively, it might have been valuable to set time to look at driving and restraining factors at the outset. Yet at this time the team was developing an understanding of each other and the way in which the new team might work. We also did not yet appreciate the complex political factors at work within the LA.

The Regional Mentoring Standards project

As we had come from differing areas of the Faculty, our first objective was to gather information about the full range of Faculty operations in order to be able to represent the University profile accurately with schools and the LA. For some of us, discovering the differing structures and systems operating between primary and secondary ITE programmes, and the PGCE and BA ITE programmes and Employment-Based Routes, as well as Continuing Professional Development (CPD), meant a re-appraisal of our perspectives on teacher education. As we have indicated earlier, these discoveries sometimes

challenged our own values and beliefs which had evolved in our previous context.

At the same time, we wanted to be actively 'out there', but were required to move through a series of protocol meetings in establishing contact with the LA. In some cases, several months would pass before these meetings took place. We now recognise some of the factors at play within the clusters and Areas may mean that meeting with us was not seen as strategically significant by the LA officers.

We agreed to identify a theme around which we would all focus in our different Areas. We decided to promote the recognition of mentoring expertise through the use of a recently developed Regional framework for mentoring. The South-East Region 2 (SE2) Regional Mentoring Standards were developed using funding from the TTA⁵ Partnership Project. The Regional Steering Committee (RSC), of which one of the PTLs was a member, submitted a proposal to establish a region wide framework for the recognition of mentoring expertise to be developed during 2004/5. A number of other regional Partnership Project Steering Committees had also submitted similar proposals and there were opportunities to share work in progress and outcomes at two conferences held during 2005. In the SE2 Region, the final version of the Standards was disseminated in autumn 2005, and it seemed appropriate for the Partnership Team to seek to promote these with individual mentors and with schools as part of their role.

The SE2 Regional Mentoring Standards are based on a three stage model of progression, from initial mentoring experience through 'experienced' towards an 'advanced' stage.

For Example:

What this standard means	This standard relates to the need for mentors to see their role as furthering their own professional development and consequently as part of their own learning process.
How to meet this standard	To meet this standard, mentors need to demonstrate that they are reflective practitioners willing to update their knowledge and skills.
Exemplification of expectations for new mentors or those with relatively little experience of working with a range of trainees	Mentors need to be able to give examples of how they have used their training or self evaluation to improve their mentoring practice.
Expectations for experienced mentors	In addition, experienced mentors show that they have shared their expertise and examples of good practice with other mentors and/or colleagues within their department or school.
Expectations for advanced mentors	In addition, advanced mentors can show how they have located their mentoring practice within a wider theoretical framework.

Standard P6: Recognises the contribution of the role of mentor to professional development.

The Standards are also based on the premise that any mentor in any school context should be capable of achieving experienced and advanced mentor status should they so wish. In some cases this would require liaison with a University, or other provider, to arrange for professional development opportunities. The Partnership Team saw in this potential for broadening the scope of partnership work with ITE mentors and of developing a richer dialogue within the mentoring community, with opportunities for research and innovation, and links with CPD.

Consequently, we have now begun to hold discussions with individual mentors centring on the Regional Standards for 'experienced' and 'advanced' recognition. These have been stimulating and rewarding as educational discourse, but they have also provided further food for thought, both in relation to the assumed knowledge base within the Regional Standards and also about our own shared understanding as a Team.

Advanced mentors are expected to show (see above) 'how they have located their mentoring practice within a wider theoretical framework' in order to meet one of the Regional Standards for Professional Values and Practice. (To counter any possible stereotypical assumptions at this stage, it is important to stress that the Regional Standards were developed by a working group consisting mainly of representatives from schools, and not solely of University Education Department staff.) The case of one highly experienced mentor who has contributed extensively to University partnership work on a number of levels, and who demonstrates a high level of reflection in, and on, practice, has challenged the Team in terms of arriving at an agreed position about professional knowledge.

In this case, the mentor can not explicitly make links between their own practice and wider theoretical frameworks. They have not undertaken any further study in the field of mentoring, or read any of the mentoring literature. Nevertheless, there is ample evidence that this mentor has a clearly articulated set of beliefs about professional learning, based in personal experience beyond their own immediate school context.

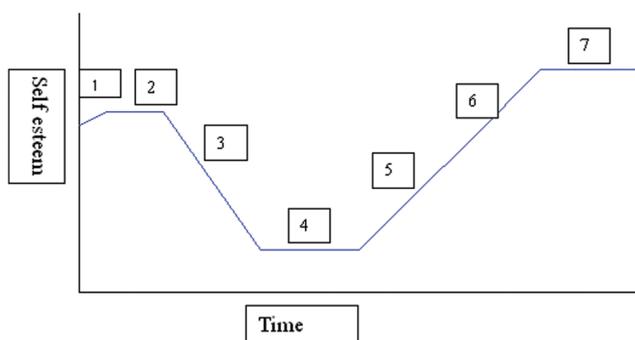
The concept underpinning this element of the Regional Mentoring Standards is clearly that of Hoyle's (1974) well known distinction between the restricted and extended professional; to some extent the mentor in our case sits somewhere between the two. Opinions are divided in the Partnership Team as to the relative significance of knowledge of theoretical frameworks versus evidence of experiential learning or 'craft knowledge' (Brown and McIntyre, 1993). Banks, Leach and Moon (1996:8) suggest that professional knowledge arises from the 'active intersection of subject knowledge, school

knowledge and pedagogical knowledge', and the question our work has raised for us partly revolves around the nature of 'subject knowledge' for mentoring and how it might be identified. If, as some of the PTLs believe, we need to link 'advanced' mentor status to theory, and yet this is a potential inhibitor, procedures must be put in place to support mentors' professional development in this area. This might include attending a half-day session at CCCU for 'advanced' status, or encouraging and supporting mentors to contribute to the university-based components of programmes. This issue continues to be hotly contested amongst the team.

Moving forward

Whilst change can be defined as focusing on the individuals, when the individuals themselves have different needs and agendas as a result of the other roles they play, tensions are likely to result. If a stage theory of change is applied to the Partnership Team at the present time, we see ourselves at an interesting point in our development.

The sequence in the model below suggests that those involved in significant change move through feelings of immobilisation (insecurity, unsure of role or purpose), minimising the change where possible, depression at recognising the reality of the situation towards a stage of letting go of some previously held positions and beginning to test new behaviours and developing new ways of working. This is where we feel we now are: despite our initial willingness to embrace a new project, dealing with the implications has not been as straightforward as we might have expected.



1. Feeling of immobilisation
2. Minimisation stage
3. Depression
4. Letting go
5. Testing
6. Search for meaning
7. Internalisation

(Jones, 1992)

Figure 1: sequence model

At the start of the year we did not formally define ourselves as being engaged in a change project, or utilise change management analysis. With the benefit of 6 months hindsight, what the team has been involved in

is definitely change related. The project was novel as there appears to be no tried and tested solution. It is not surprising that projects of this type tend to be unstructured, open and un-programmed. Plans develop after the fact, rather than as a set of consciously identified aims (Johnson and Scholes, 1993:248, Pettigrew, 1985:249 and Mintzberg, 1992:250), and we now recognise that there may be more frustration to come as we continue to develop our shared identity and internalise a new way of working.

Seller and Hannay (2000) report on the implications for university–school collaboration based on the experience of the Field Centre Model. This has been a long term (30 year) development where some members of academic staff are based in school districts, away from the central University of Ontario, and work alongside schools to support locally initiated change activity. In this way 'they develop long term partnerships and relationships that embed school-university collaboration deeply into the regional educational landscape' (ibid:200).

This model has not always been popular within the University of Ontario, particularly during periods of financial pressure, and it has required modifications to the pre-existing culture and structures. The enthusiasm of school district personnel however, has convinced senior university administrators to sustain the approach.

The Partnership Team are of the view that, as with the Ontario Field Studies model, effective collaboration between the University and schools needs to grow out of being firmly embedded in the local context. As single individuals attempting to build relationships within the LA structures we appear at present to be hampered by our own isolation, and by the different agendas which are held by the AEOs and LEOs, who are the gatekeepers to the formal structures which have been created from above. Where initiatives are being successful they arise out of more informal structures based around perceived need. They are also largely based on previously established relationships, sometimes with key individuals and sometimes with schools.

The importance of taking a long term perspective on developing sustainable partnerships cannot be over-emphasised, but is this acceptable in the present, 'quick fix' world of education?

While continuing to seek opportunities to work with the LEOs and AEOs wherever we can, we now believe that our credibility and our impact may be better developed by other means. One possibility we are now discussing is for us to work together as a team within a single geographical area which will lie within an LA cluster, but may not involve all schools. In this way we hope to develop a possible model for broader partnership

practice which could then be disseminated within the LA.

Biographies

Sue Field is Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at Canterbury Christ Church University. Since 1999, she has taught and supervised students on PGCE and Masters courses, including the NQT accreditation scheme. She has recently undertaken the role of Partnership Team Leader for CPD in East Kent, liaising with local schools and the LA. Sue is also on the core project team responsible for the Teacher Training Resource Bank (TTRB), a website funded by the TDA, providing reviews of resources which contribute to the research and evidence base underpinning teacher education. Currently studying for a Doctorate in Education, Sue's research interests include policy and practice in all areas of education.

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www.education.canterbury.ac.uk/partnership

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5. Teacher Training Agency

14. Making a Positive Choice: Opting to Train and Teach in Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances.

Lesley Cartwright: University of Wolverhampton; Helen Singh: Wolverhampton Local Authority; Sharon Churm: Improvement consultant.

Summary

This paper describes and evaluates year one of a three-year funded programme of collaboration between secondary schools in Wolverhampton and the University of Wolverhampton. The aim is to improve recruitment and retention in the most challenging schools in the city by identifying and selecting PGCE students during their training year and placing them for their main attachment in the school where they will be employed from 1 July. Specialist mentoring and coaching and intensive residential training complemented the normal university-based and school-based training programmes. Participants actively chose to train in schools facing challenging circumstances (SfCC). Emerging from the evaluation of year one is a model for teacher training that has the confidence of head teachers, is making a positive contribution to the PGCE overall, and has the potential, through enhanced mentor training and development that focuses on learning and teaching, to have a lasting impact on school improvement.

Key Words

School improvement / Initial Teacher Education and training / mentoring / urban schools / challenging schools

Background and Context

The University of Wolverhampton, through its Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), trains some 200 secondary teachers across eight subjects, including all the core subjects. The majority attend a one-year full-time PGCE course but about 15% opt for a flexible training route. Most are local to the region, and there is a high proportion of mature and minority ethnic students. There is a strong partnership with most of the Black Country schools (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton) and with some schools in Birmingham, Coventry, Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Shropshire. However there is much competition for training places between providers of Initial Teacher Education and Training (ITET) across the region and the problem of securing high quality training experiences for all students persists despite recent Training and Development Agency (TDA) funded initiatives (Regional Partnership Promotion Projects, 2004-05, Partnership Development Schools from 2005). Furthermore, the number of schools placed in 'special measures' by Ofsted in recent years, the general perception that challenging schools are 'hard places to teach in' (Ofsted, 2000) and the pressures on teachers in challenging schools that can make taking a student teacher feel like the last straw, have all militated against the procurement of quality training in the very schools that need it most if they are to recruit good teachers.

Wolverhampton Local Authority (LA), like many LAs with a high proportion of inner city and urban schools, faces many challenges in a number of its schools: pupils with socio-economic disadvantage and consequent low prior attainment, poor motivation and low self-esteem; a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN); a significant number of transient pupils and

difficulties in the recruitment and retention of high quality and appropriately trained staff. A collaborative project that would go some way to addressing the problems faced by provider and schools was proposed by Helen Singh on behalf of Wolverhampton LA in 2005 and the project, funded by the ITT Improvement Directive of the TDA, was launched in September 2005.

Purpose

Evidence from recruitment and retention patterns in Wolverhampton LA suggests that, on the whole, teachers who do not begin their careers in challenging schools are unlikely to leave their relative comfort zone to take up posts in such schools later in their career. However, recruiting and retaining Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) was only partially successful. The greatest success stories seemed to be about those NQTs appointed directly to the schools in which they had completed their final school placement. Yet many schools and departments within schools, with the greatest staff shortages perceived themselves, or were perceived by the university, to be inadequately resourced to train teachers. Hall et al. (2005), in researching the factors influencing NQTs in their choice of first appointment school, concluded that recruiting to challenging schools is a 'precarious process' and cite several influencing factors including the location of the school in relation to where individuals live, and a perceived lack of prestige attached to working in urban schools by their parents. Personal biography appears to have a strong influence: 'Those entering into the profession arrive with strongly formed ideas about schools and teaching, which, in turn, are linked to their aspirations for themselves as teachers.'

The aim of the project was thus to:

- ♦ Establish excellent school-based training in those schools perceived to be challenging environments in which to learn to be a teacher;
- ♦ Smooth the transition from the training year to employment in these same schools.

At the same time we were mindful of the need to create a model that would be embedded at the end of the funding period, had the potential to be replicated in other areas within the University of Wolverhampton partnership, and would be of relevance and validity beyond the region.

Method

The concept was, in essence, a very simple one. Head teachers identified vacancies for September 2006 and these were filled in December 2005 by selecting promising candidates from the PGCE year. The selected students thus began their final school attachment, running from January to June, in the school where they would be employed from 1 July. In addition to the security of having a job, students received a laptop computer and an enhanced salary of £500 per annum over the first three years of employment. Their university-based training was complemented by two intensive residential weekends. Their school-based training was strengthened by support from school-based tutors (SBTs) who themselves received enhanced mentor training, including the opportunity of accreditation leading to a Post Graduate Certificate in Mentoring and Coaching. The project's lead mentor made visits to schools to support both the student teacher and the SBT. Participants were to be part of something special rather than feeling marginalised by their school's perceived status in the educational pecking order. Thus the aim was to:

- ♦ Turn on its head the notion that there is something inferior about teaching and training in urban and inner city schools;
- ♦ Equip key departments in challenging schools with the skills and confidence to provide high quality school-based ITET;
- ♦ Empower teachers in training to become 'interactive participants in classroom encounters rather than innocent bystanders, or victims' (Larrivee, 2000:298);
- ♦ Secure appointments to schools of good quality NQTs who would already be inducted into the ethos and community of the school and who would have started to develop the specialist skills of what Hall et al. (2005) call an 'urban pedagogy'.

In reality, the project demanded a leap of faith from all participants. Strategically creative head teachers put their trust in the project team to select appropriate candidates; university tutors expressed concern about the challenging schools context: 'My initial thoughts were

that if the students had to focus overly much on very challenging behaviour, this would detract from their development as English teachers'. Most importantly, the students themselves were putting their trust in all of us to provide them with the training and support that would smooth their transition for ITET to NQT and beyond. Indeed, one of the reasons given by those ITET students who did not apply was the risk factor involved in committing to an unknown school so early in their training.

Evaluation

Outcome: initially the team hoped to make the following appointments: business studies (1); English (2); mathematics (2); modern foreign languages (MFL) (1) physical education (PE) (2) and science (1). No suitable applicant for MFL came forward. All other posts were filled. Subsequently one English and one PE declined to take up appointments in the schools. Six NQTs have begun their induction year in the schools in which they were trained. The social and ethnic mix of this group reflects that of the communities in which they are working.

The selection of candidates for the project represented the biggest challenge. As the second attachment placements (beginning January) are confirmed before the end of the autumn term, initial presentations for the project were made in October, at a point where students were about to begin their first placement and where, as one university tutor put it, 'most of them were still scared witless about going into any school, let alone a challenging one!' Those who applied had a clear sense of their personal values and what they wanted to achieve as a teacher: 'I could picture myself in a challenging school, making a difference'. However the number of applicants overall was low (17 for 9 places) and the reason given, at the end of the year, by half of a control group questioned, was lack of confidence or feeling nervous about facing pupils in challenging classrooms. Yet this group had gone on to achieve well in their respective schools, some of which had challenging features. In the first year of the project the planned co-observation of all candidates' teaching by the lead mentor and the university teacher was not always realised due to diary constraints. Principles established as a result of this early evaluation include:

- ♦ A slightly lower key introduction to the concept of challenging schools, with the emphasis on urban pedagogy and the needs of disadvantaged children against the backdrop of the 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) strategy;
- ♦ An application process that will enable individuals to reflect on and articulate their values, drawn from their personal biographies, around inclusive education and equal opportunity in order that they might make a positive choice to teach in challenging schools;

- ♦ Earlier planning of school visits for selected candidates to consider their potential for teaching in challenging classrooms.

Evaluations of the project were collected, through questionnaire and interview, from the LA, head teachers, SBTs and university tutors at the end of the year, and from the student teachers at various stages during the year. The data suggest that the perceived 'risks' had been worth taking. In particular, the NQTs now see themselves as professionals committed to working in challenging urban schools and feel well-equipped for what lies ahead: 'I have had focused training and support throughout, and feel well equipped to work in a school facing challenging circumstances'. All participants felt that they had done better than they would have done outside the project. Whilst there is a need for caution given the very small sample size, there is clear potential in the future to change the perception that teachers in training must inevitably do less well when being trained in more challenging environments.

Participants valued very highly the specialist coaching received during the residentials and the additional support from their SBTs and the lead mentor in school. SBTs were also very positive about their additional mentor training and the support from the lead mentor. Again however, some caution is needed in interpreting the responses. There is no doubt that this small, exclusive group felt privileged by being selected for something special; they did not have the additional pressure of having to seek employment during their training year, and they were guaranteed support from mentors who had a vested interest in their development. 'I know it's wrong to feel like this' one SBT reflected, 'but you do put more in when you know you are going reap the benefits than you do if your trainee is going off to a job in a different school'. This begs the question as to whether school-based training demands too much of overstretched teachers when it requires them to engage in high quality training for the sake of the profession in general, with no apparent or immediate return on their investment.

The university-based elements of the course have been enhanced by inputs from the project team and in particular from Helen Singh, who has made a significant contribution to ways in which the objectives of the ECM strategy will be addressed by university staff during the training year. There is further potential to develop student teachers' reflection on their personal biography and the impact this might have on the values and attitudes they bring to teaching, and there is a wealth of expertise to be tapped, for the benefit of all student teachers, on classroom management and relationship building with disadvantaged young people.

Head teachers in the LA declared unanimous support for the project at a recent meeting and their evaluations reflect satisfaction with the project outcomes. In particular they value the enhanced staff planning and continuity that the project allows, and are already seeing the potential of NQTs and SBTs with a clear focus on 'urban pedagogy' for an embedded and sustained improvement in learning and teaching within school.

Conclusion and looking to the future

From small beginnings we have established a model that has the potential to grow over the next two years and at the same time to become embedded in the culture of both university-based and school-based training. Year one student teachers have now become NQTs and are already acting as advocates for the project as the second year begins. By the time the funded project comes to a close in two years' time these first participants will be ready to train as school-based tutors. In the meantime their current school-based tutors are already working across departments in their schools, spreading the message that ITET is a powerful mechanism for securing high quality teaching staff. Through the Post Graduate Certificate in Mentoring they are enhancing their skills of reflection in order to articulate good practice with and for their NQTs and the student teachers who will follow them.

The last words go to two of the project's participants, written at the end of the first full week as an NQT: 'I feel part of something exciting, innovate' and 'I felt and still feel that schools facing challenging circumstances should not be disregarded'.

Biographies

Lesley Cartwright is a principal lecturer in the Teacher Education Division of the School of Education at the University of Wolverhampton. She is Secondary Partnership Co-ordinator with responsibility for managing the training partnership and assuring the quality of school-based training. Before joining the University she taught in Sandwell.

Sharon Churm is an independent educational consultant who has taught in challenging schools in Wolverhampton. She has worked very closely with the University for many years as a senior mentor and coach at Deansfield School and works closely with other teachers to develop their role as SBT in ITET.

Helen Singh is a national school improvement adviser working closely with the DfES and a number of LAs, including Wolverhampton. She was formerly head of Deansfield School, one of the most challenging schools in Wolverhampton.

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15. Developing Early Years Education ITT Provision to match Every Child Matters.

Sue Rogers: Edge Hill.

Summary

This paper summarises the recent development of an innovative Early Years Education QTS (Qualified Teacher Status) Degree programme, specifically designed to address the Early Years agenda. This programme provides a unique training experience for those qualifying to work with 3-7 year olds, including experience in a wide variety of Early Years settings and an HE curriculum designed to model effective quality practice in Early Years.

Keywords

Early years / Qualified Teacher Status / 'Every Child Matters'

The context for development

Edge Hill has a well-established national and regional reputation for high quality Primary Initial Teacher Training. During 2001 -2002 all primary provision was revalidated to meet the National Standards and Requirements as set out in the DfES 'Qualifying to Teach' (TTA, 2002). We had, since 1999, focused all provision on two key stages, namely Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Previously, we have had a great deal of success in training across 3 age phases and this included the Early Years (now known as the Foundation Stage). As part of the Faculty of Education's development plan, we took the opportunity to bid for TTA numbers to further strengthen and develop the range of programmes offered within Primary Education at Edge Hill. As a result of a successful Ofsted inspection during 2000/ 2001 and due to school and applicant demand, we validated a degree focusing on the Foundation Stage and Key Stage One in April 2004. At this time nationally, the Early Years and the Foundation Stage in particular, had undergone considerable development and enhancement. Sure Start, National Standards, the publication of significant reports and papers including The Green Paper, 'Every Child Matters' (TSO, 2003), had combined to ensure that the Foundation Stage has the recognition, status and resources that impact on quality for children. The Foundation Stage had become a crucial and distinct stage of children's learning. We identified the need to educate professionals to know and understand about young children from birth and to enhance the diversity of provision that existed. This seemed to be an excellent time to develop a high quality programme for Early Years teachers.

The unique and innovative qualities of the programme

The Early Years Undergraduate Programme was, at the time of validation, and we feel still is, innovative and unique. The programme was designed by a team of specialists with expertise across Early Years settings and provides a cohesive and coherent trainee experience. The structure of the Early Years Undergraduate Programme reflects the principles and philosophy of

excellence within the Early Years. The course team built upon current high quality primary provision at Edge Hill and extended this to create a distinctively designed programme that has progression and coherence built into each year.

Features that indicate the uniqueness of the programme include:

- ◆ Provision- based training that enables trainees to draw upon the breadth and diversity of Early Years provision including carefully identified exemplar visits and a serial attachment in Year 3 with a focus on meeting individual trainee needs across the 0-7 age group;
- ◆ A curriculum strand that is delivered in a unique way, modelling high quality pedagogy, planning and implementation within the framework of the Foundation Stage curriculum;
- ◆ Option modules offering trainees the opportunity to further develop and broaden their knowledge and understanding related to identified aspects of relevance to the Foundation Stage and Key Stage One;
- ◆ A specialism that is distinct as well as having a clear relationship with all other strands of the programme.

The programme has four strands that are based upon a spiral curriculum model. In addition to progression within each strand, the programme enhances cohesion between each strand, encouraging the trainee to 'make sense' of their learning alongside the models of teaching and learning being delivered. The model of delivery was designed to enhance the trainee experience. This is particularly evident within the curriculum strand. The specialism is distinct and carefully designed to enhance the Professional Values and Practice, Curriculum and Provision-Based Training strands of the programme. It is designed to enable trainees to develop an understanding of national developments in Early Years education and recent changes within the legislative framework, taking account of the learning and development of young

children, of childhood and family, of historical and legislative perspectives and of leadership.

Programme Content

The Early Years Undergraduate Programme has been designed to be both academic and vocational and to meet all statutory, national requirements for Initial Teacher Training. It aims to train high quality Early Years teachers who:

- ♦ achieve the National Standards for the award of Qualified Teacher Status;
- ♦ meet the needs of schools/settings and children/young people;
- ♦ develop during their induction and throughout their professional careers.

The programme will also address the standards for Early Years Professionals. The programme is based around four key strands which begin with modules delivered in Year 1 and develop in breadth, depth and complexity during Years 2 and 3 of the degree programme. During Year 1 trainees work at an observational level describing the practice they observe and engage in, beginning to recognise how educational theory links to Early Years education and practice. Tutors provide carefully structured and well-timed support and guidance. During Year 2 trainees are expected to become more independent in their learning and the balance of independent and directed tasks and study should reflect this expectation. The tasks in Year 2 focus on analysing and reflecting upon practice, relating their own and their colleagues' practice firmly to educational theories and statutory documents. By Year 3 trainees will receive more minimal direct tutor contact. The focus of tasks in Year 3 is on interpretation of policy into practice.

The programme is designed around a spiral curriculum model whereby trainees are introduced to important themes during Level 1 and these are returned to in more depth and also extended in terms of breadth at Levels 2 and 3. In Year 2 the focus is upon organisation and management issues in relation to the curriculum and in Year 3 the wider agenda with the consideration of whole school/ setting and/or sector issues, the range of contexts for learning, key influences on teaching and learning, current educational practice and evaluation, assessment and accountability is explored in depth.

A similar spiral curriculum model exists for provision-based training with trainees undertaking exemplar visits, periods of serial attachment, preparation days and block experiences in the Early Years and primary sector, across the Foundation Stage and Key Stage One. Trainees undertake an assessed Initial Block Experience in Year 1, an assessed Developmental Block Experience in Year 2 and one final assessed Synoptic Block Experience during Year 3 of the programme.

The strengths and areas of expertise of school/setting-based mentors and Edge Hill Tutors underpin the curriculum. The four curriculum strands are:

1. Professional Values and Practice.
2. The Curriculum.
3. Specialism in Early Years Education.
4. Provision Based Training.

1. Professional Values and Practice

Professional Values and Practice provides a focus upon educational theory, research, experience and practice. Trainees study towards understanding the nature of teaching and of young children's development, growth, thinking and learning. The concepts of care and education, continuity, transition, inclusion, organisation and management, teaching and learning, the environment, monitoring and assessment and evaluation within a play-based curriculum are explored.

PVP modules are flexible enough to accommodate changes and developments and Ofsted have recently recognised that modules are developing effectively in preparing trainees to understand and deal with current issues in Early Years and primary education. Within this degree programme PVP forms the 'spine' and is very strongly linked to all curriculum modules.

PVP links with curriculum modules by studying generic aspects of, e.g. learning through play, transition, planning, assessment. These aspects are then expanded upon and made specific to Foundation Stage and Key Stage One curriculum modules.

All trainees also study two modules each year in the specialist subject of 'Early Years'. The role of the Early Years Specialism modules is crucial as the specialism provides trainees with a strong underpinning to their understanding in college based and provision-based work, particularly PVP.

Ofsted recently stated that a key strength is 'the strong coherence that exists between professional studies and the training provided in core and foundation subjects'.

PVP modules aim to develop trainees' understanding of the way in which teachers plan, teach and assess, including formative and summative processes of monitoring and assessment, organise and manage learning and teaching, work with a range of adults, including parents and in multi-disciplinary settings and provide for individual needs through inclusive practice.

Five Exemplar Visits are integral to the PVP module in Year 1. All trainees visit five Early Years settings:

- i. Primary school
- ii. Multicultural infant and nursery school
- iii. LEA maintained nursery school

- iv. Integrated children's centre
- v. Setting in the private and voluntary sector

These visits give the trainees an overview of the breadth of current early years provision within the national agenda. Provision Based Training is inextricably linked to PVP. PVP modules prepare trainees very effectively for serial and block placements and support their reflection and evaluation following them. This preparation through PVP as well as curriculum modules is praised by trainees and school/setting based colleagues.

The importance of personal reflection, reviewing and target setting is highlighted early on in the programme, as trainees are supported in their recording of their progress in the Profile of Professional Development within PVP as well as curriculum seminar sessions at significant points in the year.

PVP tutors are also personal tutors to the trainees in their PVP group. Personal tutorials are built into the PVP programme at significant times during the year. Trainees also arrange to meet their personal tutors at other times on the basis of individual need.

2. The Curriculum

The decision to write this degree programme with a chronological series of placements, i.e. Birth to Three as part of exemplar visits, Nursery placements in Year 1, Reception placements in Year 2 and Key Stage One placements in Year 3 with the curriculum designed to run alongside was crucial and provided a starting point and is now seen to be very effective by tutors, trainees and schools/settings.

The Curriculum has a focus upon knowledge and understanding, expectations and requirements, curriculum and planning models and approaches and effective strategies for implementation. Birth to Three Matters, the Areas of Learning, Early Learning Goals, and National Curriculum subjects are examined. There are modules that all trainees study as well as module options towards the final stage of the programme.

At the beginning of Year 1 trainees study an overview of the curriculum Birth to Five, focusing particularly at this time on Birth to Three Matters. This forms their study of the 'previous key stage' and is invaluable in terms of progression.

The Foundation Stage curriculum is studied in Year 1 through modules on Areas of Learning but the holistic way in which this is approached ensures that trainees understand the interactive and child-centred nature of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Tutors and trainees evaluate this approach very favourably and many comments have been made by setting-based colleagues

about the depth of trainees' understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and their preparedness to teach it when they carry out nursery serial and block placements in Year 1.

The high level of final grades of trainees on Year Two Block Experience in Reception classes, as well as comments from school-based colleagues, also reflects this.

The Foundation Stage curriculum modules are designed as follows:

AOL 101 consists of:

- ♦ Birth to Five overview
- ♦ Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- ♦ ICT in the Foundation Stage

Trainees study this module first. AOL 102, AOL 103 and AOL 104 follow that, running concurrently as follows:

- ♦ AOL 102 Communication, Language and Literacy and Knowledge and Understanding of the World (History, Geography and RE)
- ♦ AOL 103 Mathematical Development and Creative Development (Art and Music)
- ♦ AOL 104 Knowledge and Understanding of the World (Science and DT) and Physical Development

This organisation enables tutors to model effectively to trainees the holistic and interactive nature of the Foundation Stage curriculum.

Assignments which assess trainees' understanding in these modules are also cross curricular, for example the assignment for AOL 104 concerns the provision of outdoor play. It is felt that it will be possible to accommodate the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage (0-7) without major disruption. The curriculum in Year 2 focuses initially on transition from Reception to Year One and related current issues and recommended practice. Trainees then study Key Stage One core curriculum modules in English, Mathematics, Science and ICT. In Year 3 trainees study modules in all Key Stage One core and foundation subjects. Trainees study one option module in Year 3. Currently the validated modules are:

- ♦ Special Educational Needs
- ♦ Birth to Three
- ♦ ICT Co-ordination
- ♦ Environmental Education

3. Specialism in Early Years Education

This strand of the programme enables trainees to build upon and extend the breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding gained from the Professional Values and Practice, the Curriculum and Provision- based training strands of the degree.

Specialism modules are:

- ◆ Year 1
 - Developmental Processes of Learning
 - Young Children and their Families
- ◆ Year 2
 - Childhood, Children's Rights and Transition
 - Historical and Legislative Perspectives
- ◆ Year 3
 - Leadership and Management in the Early Years (double module)

It is viewed by tutors, trainees and school/setting based colleagues as a strength of the programme which gives trainees an understanding of child development which is not usually found in ITT programmes and an understanding of current issues in Early Years care and education, all of which serve to underpin their work in other aspects of the programme and to help them to become very strong Early Years practitioners. The Early Years Specialism strand is designed to exceed some aspects of DfES (2005) 'Qualifying to Teach' Standards and to offer trainees opportunities beyond these requirements.

4. Provision based Training

Provision-based training provides an extensive programme of school/ setting-based training and experience has been planned in a way that is coherent and progressive. Trainees are placed within a range of high quality local authority, voluntary and private sector settings during the three years of the programme. The pattern, requirements and expectations have been designed to ensure that trainees meet the DfES Standards across both the Foundation Stage and Key Stage One. Trainees are supported within this rich range of diverse settings by high quality professionals trained by Edge Hill.

Provision based training consists of:

- ◆ Exemplar visits (see PVP)
- ◆ Serial attachments
- ◆ Block experiences

As previously stated, the decision to write this degree programme with a chronological series of placements, i.e. Birth to Three as part of exemplar visits, Nursery placements in Year 1, Reception placements in Year 2 and Key Stage One placements in Year 3 with the curriculum designed to run alongside and support this is seen to be very effective by tutors, trainees and schools/settings.

This model is as follows:

- ◆ Year 1 serial and block placements in nursery settings
- ◆ Year 2 serial and block placement in Reception (autumn/spring)
- ◆ Year 2 summer serial attachment in Key Stage 1

- ◆ Year 3 serial and block placements in Key Stage 1 (autumn and spring/summer)
- ◆ Year 3 serial attachment (late summer) is flexible in order to allow trainees to select an area of particular interest to explore or revisit

A pilot partnership was carried out and evaluated with a private nursery school during 2004-6. This was very successful and widely acclaimed. It will be extended as the opportunity and need to work more extensively with the private and voluntary sector is crucial in the current early climate.

Future programme developments

The Early Years Education Undergraduate Programme was inspected as part of the 2005-6 round of Primary and Early Years Short Ofsted inspections of initial teacher training in January 2006. The draft report emphasises the strengths of Early Years ITT provision and the strength of the relationship between all of the institution's ITT provision and the 'Every Child Matters' (ref): Change for Children Outcomes Framework. The team involved in developing this original programme have now also collaborated to produce a suite of new Foundation Degrees and associated top up Level 3 programmes in the Early Years area: in Early Years Leadership (for graduate managers and leaders), Early Years Education (to lead into this programme, with the opportunity to gain QTS) and Early Years Practice (for those aspiring to become part of the Early Years workforce).

The team includes internal and external partners, from a wide range of settings, who are keen to ensure that the training and development provided for all adults working in 3-7 settings is of the highest quality and continues to be at the cutting edge of best practice and critical scholarship and research.

Future opportunities now exist to revisit the programme, as it moves into its final year and as we approach revalidation to match new ITT Standards designed to match the 'Every Child Matters' Agenda. The revalidated programme starts from a position of great strength and any new developments incorporated in to the revalidation will ensure that provision meets the requirements of the Early Years Professional status and the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for everyone working to support children, families and carers as part of the Children's Workforce. The strengths identified and developed by the team and the current programme's emphasis on Birth to Three and provision based training in a wide variety of private, voluntary and public sector settings will be essential requirements to meet this continually developing agenda based on inter-disciplinary working in multi-agency settings.

Biography

Sue Rogers is Early Years Programme Leader at Edge Hill University.

Reference

TSO – The Stationery Office (2003) 'Every Child Matters' (London, TSO).

TTA – Teacher Training Agency (2002) Qualifying to Teach (London, TTA).

Appendices

Code	Title/Description	Credits
Level One		
PVP 100E	Professional Value and Practice: Children Learning and Teachers Teaching	30
AOL 101	Areas of Learning 1, AOL 101 Birth to Five, Personal, Social & Emotional Development and ICT	15
AOL 102	Areas of Learning 2: AOL 102 Communication, Language and Literacy and Knowledge & Understanding of the World (History, Geography, RE)	15
AOL 103	Areas of Learning 3: AOL 103 Mathematical Development and Creative Development (Art & Music)	15
AOL 104	Areas of Learning 4: AOL 104 Knowledge & Understanding of the World (Science and D& T) and Physical Development	15
EYS 100	The Developmental Processes of Learning	15
EYS 101	Young Children and the Family	15
PBT 100	Provision-Based Training	15
Level Two		
PVP 200E	Professional Values and Practice: The Role of the Practitioner in Planning and Organising for Children's Progression and Needs	30
ECE 200	Early Years Core English	15
ECM 200	Early Years Core Mathematics	15
ECS 200	Early Years Core Science	15
ECI 200	Early Years Core ICT	15
EYS 200	Childhood: Rights and Transition	15
EYS 201	Historical and Legislative Perspectives	15
PBT 200	Provision-Based Training	Ungraded

Code	Title/Description	Credits
Level Three		
PVP 300E	Professional Values and Practice: Themes and Issues: Policy and Practice	30
EEI 300	Early Years Core English and Core ICT	15
ESM 300	Early Years Core Science and Core Mathematics	15
EFS 300	Early Years Foundation Subjects and RE	15
Options (one to be studied)		
EOP 301	Early Years Curriculum: SEN	15
EOP 302	Early Years Curriculum: ICT Co-ordination	15
EOP 303	Children: Birth to Three	15
EOP 304	Early Years Curriculum: Environmental Education in the Early Years	15
EYS 300	Leadership and Management in the Early Years	30
PBT 300	Provision Based Training	Ungraded

Appendix One: BA (HONOURS) with QTS* in Early Years Education. Module overview

Year	Type of Experience	Range of settings	Age Phase	Number of days
One	Exemplar visits	Setting A, B, C, D, E	BT, FS, KS1, KS 2	5
	Serial Attachment and Block Experience (Initial)	Setting F	Nursery	11
		Setting F		20
Two	Serial Attachment Block Experience	Setting G	Reception	7
		Setting G		30
Three	Serial Attachment Block Experience	School H	KS1	9
		School I		7
	Serial Attachment (Synoptic)	School I	BT, FS or KS1	40
School J		8		

Each trainee has the opportunity to gain experience in a minimum of ten different settings identified above as settings A to J

Appendix Two: BA (HONOURS) With QTS* in Early Years Education. Provision based training overview.

16. Inter-professional and Interagency Learning within Teacher Education: The Student Conference.

Des Hewitt: University of Derby; Katie Cuthbert: University of Derby

Summary

The development of interagency and inter-professional working in the context of 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) has highlighted two major issues. Firstly there is a long-standing acknowledgement that successful services depend on integrated management and integrated front line delivery. Secondly this integrated ideal is not readily achievable but rather vulnerable to the complexities of transition. It is apparent that initial professional education needs to respond to this by embracing the notions of interagency and inter-professional learning within programmes so that students have not only experienced this type of climate whilst training but are importantly equipped to progress the integrated agenda.

The paper presents examples of the inter-professional activities at the University of Derby. The Faculty is in the unique position to provide inter-professional learning opportunities that are appropriate and reflect the service developments in response to ECM.

Keywords

Initial Teacher Education / inter-professional learning / 'Every Child Matters'

Introduction

'Every Child Matters' (ECM) (TSO, 2003) is an important policy, which impacts on the lives of children and professionals alike. At the University of Derby structural changes at Faculty level have enabled a positive response to ECM. The Faculty includes programmes for Initial Teacher Education, early childhood studies, pre-registration nursing, occupational therapy, radiography, counselling, and social work.

In this article we will consider ECM in the context of Initial Teacher Education and inter-professional education. But first we consider assumptions which are made about well-being in childhood which are implicit in these developments.

Well-being and childhood

According to the DfES, ECM is a new approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19:

We shall put children at the heart of everything we do. All our services must be planned, developed and delivered around the needs and wants of children, young people and their families.¹

Children as social agents contribute to the reproduction of childhood through negotiations with adults and their creative production of peer cultures with other children. Williams (2004) suggests that ECM is influenced by an understanding of the different needs of children in relation to the effect on future life chances, rather than (or as well as) an understanding of childhood as culturally and socially produced.

The nearest the Green Paper comes to a wider vision for childhood is the notion of 'the protective factors' against disadvantage. These are:

- ♦ Strong relationships with parents, family and other significant adults;
 - ♦ Parental interest and involvement in education with clear and high expectations;
 - ♦ Positive role models;
 - ♦ Individual characteristics such as an outgoing nature, self-motivation, intelligence;
 - ♦ Active involvement in family, school and community life;
 - ♦ Recognition, praise and feeling valued.
- (DfES, 2003: paragraph 1.13)

The government view of well-being is not unproblematic, with some commentators seeing this conception as being limited in range. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Report 'Citizenship for Young Children' (Neale, 2003), develops a framework for the involvement not only of young people but also of young children in nurseries, schools and public services. Its strategies focus on children as creative human agents. These involve children in running their nurseries and primary schools and training children to articulate their needs.

ECM seeks to involve a range of agencies in supporting children. These include schools primarily, but also social care and health. The focus on schools as central to a more holistic conception of the well being of children seems to fly in the face of the reality of schools as pressured settings, under the spotlight of high-stakes testing:

The publication of (such) 'league tables' has now become a major event in the school calendar. It has become an annual ritual feast of celebration or condemnation. Walford (2002:48)

Whilst this holistic view of children is welcomed, there does seem to be a contradiction in this rhetoric and school improvement initiatives. Criticism of government policies towards the rights and well-being of children has come from as far a field as the United Nations who were:

... disappointed by the Government's response in a number of other areas which in our view hinders progress towards building a culture of respect for the human rights of children and displays insufficient compliance with obligations under the UNCRC [the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child] (House of Lords and House of Commons, 2003: paragraph7)

Further criticism emanated from social care professionals, who identified a contradiction between the rhetoric of ECM and the reality of the Asylum Act 2004, which seemed to exclude asylum seekers from the provision offered:

We are astounded that the Government can prepare a Green Paper aimed at raising outcomes for vulnerable and hitherto underachieving children with a title 'Every Child Matters' that implies the inclusion of all children within its range of proposals and within a matter of weeks propose legislation that will exacerbate the difficulties already facing this particular disadvantaged group (asylum seekers). (BASW (British Association of Social Workers), 2003)

In addition, there seemed to be an uneasy tension between achievement, accessibility and prescription, which will not necessarily encourage trust amongst all pupils or parents. Indeed, the focus on schools may well reinforce the marginalisation of those who are excluded or who exclude themselves from school, such as Travellers' children, children of asylum seekers and homeless families.

A clue to the change in focus of family and child welfare services can be seen in a shift of the government conception of family support. Commentators have identified a social investment model which seeks to support the development of children as part of a wider economic policy, rather than a welfare model which supports children and families for intrinsic reasons. A criticism of the Sure Start early years initiative in England is that it amounts to a 'New Deal for Toddlers', given its focus on the economic benefits of increased child care availability and hence employability of parents.

Initial Teacher Education and ECM

ECM represents a major structural change to the organisation of those professions involved with children in seeking to break down professional 'silos', and in situating specialist services within universal provision.

Changes in the teaching profession have been significant in recent years. These have been led by the TDA (Training and Development Agency) in the so-called Workforce Remodeling and Workforce Reform Agreement². Under this policy teachers have benefited from guaranteed planning, preparation and assessment non-contact. Teacher Assistants in some schools now take whole classes. There has been criticism that an over supply of Teachers from a proliferation of Initial Teacher Education routes in addition to the increased role of Teaching Assistants has led to a significant increase in Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) unemployment (TES, 2006). It would be wrong to say that ECM has been a factor in NQT unemployment, but surely the development of a range of para-professionals has contributed to a wider pool of professionals who work with children in school beyond the graduate qualified teacher.

Universities and Initial Teacher Education providers have faced a great many challenges. The General Teaching Council for England (GTCE) states that awareness-raising should be part of initial teacher training, with practical training during a teacher's induction year and elements included in on-going professional development (GTCE, 2006)

At a conference for ITE providers in 2006, the TDA appeared to support the above position, suggesting that the principal focus of the work of the teacher was teaching and learning. The TDA 2006 conference highlighted the following challenges for Initial Teacher Education:

- ♦ Changing contexts (University and school);
- ♦ Flow of information;
- ♦ Training beyond the school context;
- ♦ Learning opportunities for 'teacher trainers'.

An important implication for Initial Teacher Education was to encourage a greater understanding of effective communication between different professionals and agencies.

It is important to situate any discussion of the sharing of personal information across agency boundaries within this policy landscape of increasing partnership working. Changes to the Standards for the award of Qualified Teacher Status proposed for September 2007 (TDA, 2006), suggest that the ability to work with other professionals will be a focus for trainee teachers:

Q1.3

- ♦ understand the contribution that they and other professional colleagues make to the level of learners' attainment and their well-being;

Q2.5

- ♦ understand how the progress and well-being of learners are affected by a range of influences and use this knowledge to inform their teaching and to support learners effectively;
- ♦ be aware of current legislation concerning the safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children and young people.

For Initial Teacher Education providers there is an opportunity to consider the most effective ways of developing an understanding of the Inter-professional and Inter-agency working. These are considered in the following section.

Inter-professional Learning to Prepare an Integrated Workforce

Evident within ECM are the mechanics of integration and the roles that will be created. Crucial to the sustainability of such plans is an understanding of the nature of these new roles and how these interface as inter-professional teams.

Over the last decade many papers have been published which acknowledge that the major barrier to inter-professional practice is the way in which professional identities compete rather than establishing the common focus of service delivery (Webb et al., 2002; Nyatanga, 1998).

Developed through a uniprofessional socialisation process, professional identity acts as a template from which our behaviour and values are determined. Bourdieu (1990) calls this template 'habitus' meaning condition (of the body); character, quality: style of dress, attire, disposition, state of feeling; habit. Habitus is formed through primary, secondary and tertiary socialisation. Here tertiary socialisation might mean Higher Education and professional training. As such this framework can be seen in the ways in which professionals such as teachers, healthcare practitioners and social care workers develop a sense of professionalism and role during their respective training. Throughout training, each professional group adapts and conforms to their respective professional standards and competencies, which may or may not encompass inter-professional education and practice. With each professional group going through this process the boundaries between the groups are strengthened recognising the uniqueness of one's own profession as distinct from another is an important function of social identity.

The professional silos that Hall (2005) discusses as ways in which professionals maintain boundaries through shared language, values and approaches to problem-solving is merely professional habitus in action. Other examples of professional habitus include the identified differences in 'constrained discourses' between professions referred to by Barnes et al. (2005). Cooper et al. (2004) note how IPL (inter-professional learning) exists within the complexity of power dynamics and the diversity of class, gender and status.

Habitus and Ethnocentrism

With professional identity firmly in place after professional training there is potential for conflict between professional groups within practice. This conflict can be realistic in terms of competing for resources or cultural power and of course conflict where there is no other basis other than difference.

Maintaining only each discipline's own identity has a territorial or tribal focus in that there is a setting of boundaries that differentiates each discipline (Hall 2005). The notion of ethnocentrism is very apparent between the professions working with children. Ethnocentrism has been defined as:

A view of things in which one's own group is the centre of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it....Each group nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities, and looks with contempt on outsiders. Each group thinks its own folkways the only right one....Ethnocentrism leads a people to exaggerate and intensify everything their own folkways which is peculiar and which differentiates them from others. Sumner, 1906:13 as cited in Hogg and Vaughan, 2005

Petrie (1976) goes as far as arguing that different professional groups develop different habitus and so 'see' things in very different ways. According to Hall (2005) the objective of inter-professional learning is for professionals to understand each other's cognitive map.

Translating Uniprofessional to Inter-professional Habitus

An inter-professional habitus implies a cognitive map that is shared by professions. The integrated service agenda provides the ideal focus for this to develop. This agenda could be viewed as the 'super-ordinate' goal, the key to reducing ethnocentrism and thus the main hurdle of inter-professional learning.

There is one key message from Bourdieu's theory of habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) that can form the basis of inter-professional learning. The message is the flexibility of professional habitus. Whilst identity is often considered

stable there is scope for change so individuals can relinquish long standing professional identities in exchange for a more inter-professional identity. It is this window of opportunity that inter-professional learning needs to take advantage of and using the same developmental processes begin to break down maladaptive professional habitus and build up a more collaborative habitus.

The way in which inter-professional learning and working is integrated into practice is particularly important. The integration needs to happen in all areas of practice including research engagement; and the knowledge and skills performed by professionals working as an inter-professional team. This way of thinking needs to be supported by a compatible infrastructure such as recognition within human resource policies.

It is also necessary to acknowledge that during the early stages there will be a meeting of the old culture with the less established inter-professional approach. It may be argued that there is a generational factor involved and so quick fixes will not produce the sustainable inter-professional results required for the patient-led service. During this transitional period there are temptations to refer back to uniprofessional ways of working. Inter-professional learning must prevent this by reinforcement across the spheres and generations of practice from pre-qualification to Continuing Professional Development.

Principles of Inter-professional Education and Learning Paragraph 6.41 of 'Every Child Matters' (TSO, 2003) introduces a framework for interdisciplinary training as part of its proposals on 'workforce reform'. The key elements are:

- ♦ Understanding the developmental nature of childhood;
- ♦ Parents, parenting and family life;
- ♦ Managing transitions;
- ♦ Understanding child protection;
- ♦ Understanding risk and protective factors;
- ♦ Listening to and involving children and young people.

Such a list is limited. It appears to be framed by a developmental model of childhood. While this is important in recognizing the difference that age and physical development makes, it tends to an approach which sees childhood as a series of steps to competent adulthood. By contrast, a broader approach to the social construction of childhood enables us to understand children, whatever their age, as actors in their own right, and would chime more closely with the last heading of 'listening to and involving children' (Mayall and Alanen, 2001; Stafford et al., 2003).

Spratt et al. (2006) explained how paraprofessionals can help vulnerable children. Non-teaching workers imported into school developed new forms of 'habitus' leading to

effective teamwork to support vulnerable pupils, but they often operated in isolation from the wider teaching staff. Different professional cultures created significant barriers, which could be exacerbated by active resistance to meaningful engagement. Consequently, parallel working evolved where staff from agencies other than education supported pupils experiencing difficulties, but there was little evidence of corresponding changes to ethos or pedagogy to meet the needs of pupils in school. Expertise pertaining to the mental well-being of pupils thus tended to be compartmentalised and was not readily transferred elsewhere, and this led to a disjointed experience for pupils. The evidence strongly suggested that teachers preferred to learn from other teachers. This served to reinforce existing habitus and to isolate them from new ways of thinking (Spratt et al., 2006)

Initial Teacher Education and Inter-professional Education at the University of Derby

With over 400 trainee teachers in over 120 primary schools, the University of Derby has been responsive to the complex picture of local education. At a professional level, the Primary Teacher Education team works closely with colleagues in other disciplines. For example, an Inter-professional working group headed by the Dean of faculty and involving education, health and social work colleagues has regularly met to develop the faculty's approach to inter-professional projects and working. An annual staff development day provides an opportunity for all colleagues in the faculty to develop an understanding of current issues, such as ECM. Interestingly, at the last staff development day, professionals from a wide variety of disciplines managed to identify over 25 definitions of well-being compared with the five aims highlighted in ECM!

On the BEd and PGCE programmes, students learn about 'Every Child Matters' through their education studies sessions. These often involve colleagues from local schools and, increasingly, professionals other than teachers. For instance, on the English course trainees are taught by speech therapist and care workers from a Special school; one of the special school settings where all students are placed for an experience of working in a multi-professional SEN context. In the future, a teacher working in Integrated Children's Services will explain the most effective ways of working with cared for children. For most professionals in education raised on a diet of Bruner, Vygotsky and Piaget concepts such as 'Attachment' by John Bowlby³ are new. This theory is a major paradigm underpinning the social work professions and as such, trainee teachers should know about this for the sake of their own understanding, but also so that they gain some insight into the professional psyche of other disciplines.

A significant contribution to the understanding of other professionals is the annual Inter-professional and Inter-agency student conference at the University of Derby. The ethos of integrated children's services and the need for professionals to work together was the basis for this conference. The Faculty of Education, Health and Sciences hosts many of the professional groups who will be responsible for delivering this agenda. It was important to start this integration and shared goal at the student level.

More than 200 University of Derby students attended last year's conference focussing on children and family issues. This event was co-ordinated by Dr Katie Cuthbert and members of the Inter-professional Advisory Group. The event brought together students from nursing, social work, education, occupational therapy, radiography and those involved in youth and community work. The conference was opened by the Vice Chancellor, Professor John Coyne and the programme throughout the day demonstrated a number of strategies that have been developed specifically to safeguard the welfare of children and families. A range of examples of good practice was showcased with presentations and project stands. Comments from the participants were very positive and the faculty is now planning the 2007 conference.

The programme took the form of a traditional professional conference with key note speakers and followed by an afternoon workshop. Professor Geoff Meads from CAIPE (Centre for Advancement in Interprofessional Education) delivered an inspirational address questioning what it means to be inter-professional. Ian Johnson, Head of Services for Children and Families (Derbyshire County Council) and Rachel Dickinson, Assistant Director for Integrating Children's Services (Derby City Council) explained the implications for practice of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. Marie Shaw and Kenisha Lowe presented the 'Wordz Out' project which worked with black young people in Nottingham. The group produced a series of films which illustrated the diversity in the black community and challenged preconceptions. Finally the students worked in inter-professional groups to respond to a potential child protection case study. The case study was 'live', delivered by a local drama group.

Inter-professional professional development need not only take place in traditional ways. For instance, new technologies offer new ways of developing Inter-professional understandings:

- ♦ Virtual Learning discussions between students from different disciplines in problem-based learning;
- ♦ Staff meetings and professional development for education, health and social work tutors;
- ♦ Inter-professional teaching and learning: for example,

a multi-professional team looked at story from the perspective of nursing and primary education for elderly people on a nursing gerontology module;

- ♦ Encouraging learning from each other at a staff level through joint placement visits;
- ♦ Student face-to-face contact: case conferences and appearances as a witness in child protection cases in the University law court;
- ♦ Developing shared and critical perspectives on new developments in the public services;
- ♦ Placement options for education students out of school: for example, students on an SEN module will be placed in a hospital education setting.

Inter-professional education and learning have been at the heart of the University of Derby's response to ECM. In a sense, it is a natural progression in our work, which would have happened whether or not the new policy had arrived on the scene. Feedback from students of all professions suggests that they are very much in favour of these new ways of working. This bodes well for an uncertain but potentially rich context for the professions. Whether ECM survives the 'slings and arrows' of political developments and changes in government, Universities should not shy away from making a long term commitment to a policy which though not unproblematic could in the future liberate children, children's services and the professionals which serve them.

Biographies

Dr Katie Cuthbert is the primary contact for inter-professional developments across the Faculty of Education, Health and Sciences. Katie co-ordinates the Faculty IPE Advisory Group which has diversified with increased representation that reflects the Faculty profile. Her academic interests also include psychology, with specific focus on health and lifestyle.

Dr. Des Hewitt has taught from Year 5 to doctoral students. As Assistant Head of Teacher Education he has principal responsibility for managing the Initial Teacher Education of Primary teachers. His research and teaching encompass Primary English, Primary Modern Foreign Languages, English as an Additional Language, E-learning and the development of self-regulated learning.

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Footnotes

1. Margaret Hodge, the first Minister of State for Children, Young People and Families (Guardian Unlimited, 8 July, 2003).
2. Available at www.tda.gov.uk
3. Information available on John Bowlby at www.psychematters.com/bibliographies/bowlby.htm

17. The Implications of 'Every Child Matters': Opportunities and Challenges for Initial Teacher Education.

Sue Kay with Faith Line and Kath Orlandi: Liverpool Hope University.

Summary

The 'Every Child Matters' agenda has been and continues to be fundamental to the curriculum planning and delivery of the Advanced Study of Early Years degree pathway, leading to compulsory modules within the pathway being delivered to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and BA Combined (BAC) students together by a multidisciplinary team of tutors. This ensures the breadth and relevance of the curriculum and offers the opportunity to 'model' interagency partnership in practice. The expertise of staff has been utilised by other pathways and been drawn upon by students seeking advice about careers in a variety of roles. However challenges of working under 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) remain, particularly in relation to ensuring ITE (Initial Teacher Education) students have the skills confidence and attitude to work in effective partnership with other professionals.

Keywords

Multidisciplinary / partnership / holistic view of the child / ITE students

Context

'Every Child Matters' offers many opportunities to those in the children's workforce for challenge, improvement and working creatively. As such it represents a move into 'unchartered waters' for all professionals working with children and young people. It might be argued that in recent years, those involved in education have become accustomed to specific guidelines and therefore may feel apprehensive about the ECM framework which provides outcomes, aims and targets but is not specific about methodology.

The focus of this paper is the experience of the Advanced Study of Early Years team at Liverpool Hope University in teaching BA QTS alongside BAC students. A positive effort has been made to recruit staff with a variety of expertise from the Children's Workforce to work in partnership with existing staff within the Early Years Team since 2000; this provided a breadth of expertise and a model of multidisciplinary teamwork. Within this paper the student experience, opportunities and challenges will be explored.

Background

The 'Every Child Matters' policy (DfES, 2004), first published as a Green paper in 2003, represents the government's response to the death of Victoria Climbié. The enquiry into the circumstances of her death led by Lord Laming¹ highlighted the fact that, despite Victoria being known to various agencies, a lack of coordination led to the failure of services to protect her. The government's response to the 108 recommendations in the Laming Report was to set out a comprehensive vision for the future of children and young people's services from age 0 to 19, hence 'Every Child Matters'.

Within ECM, five outcomes are identified, which all children's and young people's services (social care, education, health, youth justice, voluntary services) are

expected to achieve in relation to their client group. Consultation with children and young people led to identification of the areas that they felt were important in their lives; being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well being. Targets have been set within these outcomes, many are specific to particular age groups or services and require partnership with parents and other agencies in order to achieve them. Progress in achieving these outcomes will be measured through Ofsted or JAR (joint area review) inspections.

ECM sets out the framework for wider policy change including extended schools, workforce remodelling and the development of the children's workforce. Together with the Children Act 2004², the legal framework to facilitate this programme of change is set out for the next 10 years. As a consequence teachers of the future are likely to find themselves working in different ways and in different contexts to the current experience. Hence the need for well trained, highly skilled, flexible teachers who are research informed and reflective practitioners.

Comprehensive Early Years provision is one of the priority areas identified within ECM; the government's intention is to establish a children's centre in every area, increase the number of nursery places and provide a well trained committed workforce to run them. The extensive Sure Start³ programme provides models of good practice in the provision of integrated services centred around the young child and family in the local community. While the long term benefits of the programme have yet to be determined through quantitative, longitudinal research, there are many examples of new ways of professionals working in partnership, see for example, Weinberger, Pickstone and Hannon (2005). Similar models of good practice are emerging across the country in relation to extended schools.

Currently any of the practitioners working in integrated services such as Children's Centres, have chosen to work in these environments which suggests a positive disposition and commitment to innovation and change. However as the programme of change is implemented across the country there will be those who are reluctant or resistant to change. Particular challenges relate to forging new ways of working together, not easy for practitioners who have been trained in separate disciplines and may have little or no experience of working in partnership or where historically stereotypical views may create barriers to working together. Even where there is commitment to the programme of change, working outside traditional professional boundaries can create anxiety and uncertainties because it takes individuals outside their 'comfort zones'. Appropriate staff development and training is essential in supporting practitioners to reflect on and develop their practice.

And yet our complementary experiences within social work with children and families and primary school teaching offer many examples of children whose lives would have been much improved through effective partnership working. In one case, a 5 year old boy's learning was adversely affected by his parents' acrimonious divorce. School should have provided a 'safe haven', away from the emotional maelstrom, in which he could thrive and learn but weekend contact took place fortnightly with contact handovers taking place in the playground on Friday afternoons. The parents' inability to set aside their own feelings and issues even for this short period led to considerable stress for the little boy who was unable to settle all day and also exhibited difficult behaviour in school on Mondays, following his return from contact. If the ECM agenda had been in existence there would have been opportunities for the professionals involved to work in a more effective on-going partnership; social care staff working with the parents to encourage them to acknowledge the effects of their behaviour on their child and to identify alternative ways of working through their difficulties and education staff, supporting the child within school to ensure he was able to 'enjoy and achieve'.

Purpose

This paper stems from the experience of the Early Years team at Liverpool Hope University in delivering the Advanced Study of Early Years degree pathway to BA QTS and BAC students. The teaching team is multidisciplinary in nature and includes staff from education, social care, health and counselling backgrounds. The team teaches all the compulsory Advanced Study of Early Years modules within the pathway to a total of 904 students in four different sites. All the BA QTS students, 185 in number, are full-time and based at Hope Park. Education staff deliver professional studies to QTS students although tutors with

different backgrounds draw on their expertise to contribute in specialist areas.

Opportunities

Experience has shown that the multidisciplinary nature of the Early Years team has influenced the curriculum within the pathway and beyond. Many benefits and opportunities have accrued, both formal and informal in nature, these can be grouped under four main headings.

Firstly, the breadth and relevance of the curriculum has been enhanced as a result of complementary staff backgrounds enabling staff to draw on their expertise to develop new modules and also to offer different perspectives within existing modules. This has enhanced the student experience as comments within the student evaluations indicate.

The opportunity to 'model' interagency partnership and cooperation in practice has also been created. Being taught by a multidisciplinary team, students have been able to appreciate how professionals may adopt different perspectives and approaches in a particular situation and to experience professional discussion and negotiation within a respectful relationship in working towards shared understandings in formulating appropriate responses. One example is where the tutors 'role play' a child protection scenario by adopting the different professional roles, as one student said, 'it stayed in the mind longer than someone talking'.

In this situation, as Lumsden (2005:52) suggests students are afforded 'the opportunity of seeing professionals from differing working and organisational cultures, with a different professional body of knowledge, different roles, different qualifications and salary scales, coming together and model good multiprofessional collaboration'. This is a point often noted by students in their evaluations, comments have included - 'good team work', 'practice essential to learning for future practitioners', 'related to work after University'.

The value of having a multidisciplinary team has also been appreciated in the wider context of the Education Deanery with the expertise of staff with backgrounds outside education being utilised by other pathways to enhance the QTS experience. Lecturers have provided input on, for example, the impact of bereavement on children or child protection in the professional studies course. This specialist knowledge has been used for the Continuing Professional Development of educational professionals through sessions delivered at Liverpool Hope University or in local schools. In addition it has led to wider curriculum developments in the writing of new HEFCE⁴ degree pathways for example, the Special Needs degree and the Childhood and Youth Studies degree.

Finally, an unforeseen consequence has been the impact of informal role models on student's career choices. Students have recognised the breadth of opportunities available to Early Years graduates through input by academic staff and guest lecturers. As a result tutors have experienced a steady stream of BAC students whose career aspirations were previously unclear seeking advice about careers in a variety of roles.

Student Experience

BA QTS and BAC Early Year students study compulsory modules together during their three years of study. These modules cover: children's physical, social and emotional development, cognitive and linguistic development and international models of Early Years practice, legislation and social policy in early childhood and diversity issues. This provides the opportunity for future Early Years professionals to study a 'common core of knowledge' which goes some way to meeting the aim of providing a 'Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce' (DfES, 2005) for the children's workforce. Through shared learning, a creative environment is promoted in which students can share ideas and challenge perspectives in order to gain a wider understanding of relevant issues.

One example can be seen in the Legislation and Social Policy in Early childhood module in the third year in which assessments require students to undertake work based learning in order to assess the impact of the implementation of a chosen policy or piece of legislation on a setting in practice. Many QTS students undertake this within their school based setting but some choose to widen their experience by looking at a different Early Years setting. The time spent in settings and the related assessment is often commented on as being a positive aspect of the module in student evaluations. A further piece of assessment requires students to look at a particular area of interest such as, asylum seekers or travellers and plan and outline a staff training session for Early Years Practitioners making reference to relevant policy and legislation. This is then presented to the seminar group providing a valuable shared learning opportunity for all students.

Students are aware they are working alongside future practitioners who are intending careers in the same sector but who are likely to hold different roles. Their experience of working together in this way should ensure they have internalised many of the principles required for effective multidisciplinary working during their academic study and therefore are best placed for taking on such roles in future. Experience would suggest that at the end of their studies the Early Years graduates have a shared language, realistic expectations of the roles of other professionals and have communication skills appropriate for interdisciplinary working.

Challenges

So far only the opportunities created by ECM have been considered however there are also challenges for those engaged in initial teaching education. There is a need to ensure students engage with the ECM agenda and have the knowledge and skills to deliver a curriculum within which the five outcomes can be met as well as the skills, confidence and attitude to work in partnership with other agencies in achieving them.

Turning attention first to ITE students' engagement with the ECM agenda, this is achieved by making ECM an integral component of the Early Years curriculum. Within the Early Years modules students are introduced to the framework in the first year when they study the physical, social and emotional development of children and consider current practice in the Foundation Stage. In the second year this is extended through the study of cognitive and linguistic development and international models of practice. In the final year, the policy implications and legislative backdrop is the subject of in-depth study and students are asked to consider the practice implications for practitioners working in the Early Years.

The curriculum for Professional Studies is being re-designed at the moment. Currently students study issues such as working with paraprofessionals, safeguarding children and health issues. It is expected that ECM and working in partnership will be placed centre stage within the Professional Studies curriculum. The content of this part of the course should reflect the need for schools to address ECM in every aspect of a child's experience. This is reflected in the new Ofsted inspections. In order to achieve this all schools settings in partnership with Liverpool Hope University have been invited to consultation meetings.

A more significant challenge is presented in ensuring ITE students have the emerging skills, confidence and attitude to work in effective partnership with other professionals. Working in partnership with others is not an entirely new concept for ITE students, through their school based experience, most will have experience of working with Teaching Assistants and Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) in the classroom environment - although sometimes this partnership is not without its difficulties. However if ECM is to become a reality there is a need for students to recognise the creative potential for working in partnership with other professionals and agencies who have not traditionally been considered 'partners' in the school environment. This might include for example, speech therapists to develop a child's language skills or the Education Welfare Officer to support a child's return to school or other agencies involved in working with the family to support the child, such as, a Family Link Worker.

Partnership with professionals will require students to have skills additional to those traditionally gained during initial teacher training. An exploration of the concept of partnership is beyond the scope of this paper but it is important to note that professionals may attribute different meanings to the term. For example, Banks (2004) and Whittington (2003) as cited by Lumsden (2005) discuss a continuum of working together which includes strategic and team/operational partnership to which Whittington adds the level of intermediate partnership and collaboration. He suggests at one end there are separated services working together on an ad hoc basis and at the other, organised integrated services.

From the relevant literature, the following key areas can be identified in relation to working in partnership: recognising needs, shared purpose, sharing information, effective communication, ensuring child/ parent involvement, joint decision making and reviewing together. Integral to these processes is 'mutual understanding and respect for each other's role and responsibility; identification of areas of common interest and concern; the establishment of common goals, policies and programmes' Loxley (1997) as cited by Lumsden (2005:44). The analogy of building a personal relationship has been used effectively to exemplify the stages of building an effective professional partnership and to promote understanding of partnership working (see Harrison, Mann, Murphy, Taylor and Thompson (2003)).

It is difficult to see how these skills could be developed without students having access to work experiences outside the education field. There would seem to be merit in looking at the possibility of providing placements in different settings in order to broaden the perspectives and understandings of QTS students in working with children, to use a well worn phrase it would require students to 'think outside the box'. This would have particular value for young students coming straight from A level study at school or college and therefore having limited life experience. Feedback from student evaluations show they value the time spent in settings and the opportunity to link assessment with work based learning. Results indicate that it is also an effective learning method.

A challenge is therefore presented for academic staff to identify and secure placements in settings outside of school although those working in multi-disciplinary teams, or having access to work based learning placements in other disciplines, will be better placed in meeting this challenge. However in order for students to develop skills and confidence in working in partnership in practice there needs to be the opportunity for academic study in this subject.

It is perhaps opportune at this stage to address the issue of professional roles and attitudes. One of the underlying, although often unacknowledged, tensions within the ECM agenda would appear to be the issue of role, status and working conditions. In working in a holistic way with children, one cannot be precious - no one professional is able to address and respond to all the child's needs nor should they be expected to. This would foster a heavy dependence on one individual and hamper the emergence of appropriate life skills. However there may be a personal tension in working in partnership, some teachers may feel they are being asked to take on the additional role of 'social worker' adding to their already heavy workload, while others may feel constrained and unable to work in a way they might want with a child's family. They may feel that their role is being undermined. There is the need for recognition and openness so these issues can be raised and addressed.

By adopting a holistic view of the child and working in partnership, the different but complementary skills of professionals can be harnessed in a creative way to meet the needs of the child. In other words deciding who would be best placed to work with the child and family on certain issues and working together to achieve the common goals. In most cases this will mean recognising the teacher is best placed to deliver the curriculum and that she has experience of working in partnership with parents. In more complex cases such as the one above, it might also be appropriate to work in partnership with a Social Worker or Family Link Worker who would be able to draw on their specialist expertise in working with the family on relationship issues.

Also on the horizon is the development of the new Early Years Professional qualification which is currently subject to consultation. It remains to be seen how this qualification will link with QTS. This development is one amongst many changes and emphasises the need for academic staff to keep abreast of practice developments through attendance at conferences, staff exchanges and close partnerships with schools and settings.

Concluding Thoughts

The opportunities and challenges presented cannot be considered without reference to the wider demographic and global changes faced by the UK and Europe. The UK, like many European countries, has an ageing population, the birth rate is falling and considerable debate is taking place regarding provision for the elderly and the age of retirement. Today's students are likely to experience increased geographical mobility and the prospect of working to the age of 685. The notion of them training for a career in which they will remain for the rest of their lives and from which they will eventually retire is unrealistic for many.

Within the debate around pension provision, it has been suggested that today's graduates are likely to have an average of 11 jobs in their lifetime, in which case the fundamental element of any professional training will be the development of key transferable skills. The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) is looking to simplify the plethora of qualifications available to those studying to work with children and to 'create a qualifications framework relevant to practitioners working across the range of services engaging with children, young people and their families and covering the majority of occupational roles in the children's workforce' (DfES, 2006:2).

The challenge will then be to ensure appropriate training at all levels to provide a highly trained workforce. This is likely to involve a common core of study to realise the vision of ECM. For ITE students it is likely to lead to the recognition that professional training ensures the development of initial skills required to perform in the role of teacher but Continuing Professional Development is essential to ensure their skills remain relevant and up to date. CPD will need to be research informed, drawing on strands of thinking developed from interdisciplinary practice because no longer can professionals working with children rely on the old orthodoxies.

In conclusion, it is an exciting time to be working within children's services. The framework for and direction of change has been set out by the government but the challenge comes from making the vision a reality. Early Years graduates will be at the forefront of this change, they will have responsibility for developing interdisciplinary practice and for shaping and enhancing the quality of the Early Years workforce. As teachers of ITE students, we are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the teachers of the future are able to take their place within the future workforce and use their knowledge, skills and empathy to improve the lives of all children and young people.

Biography

Sue Kay is Course Leader for the new Childhood and Youth Studies degree programme at Liverpool Hope University. Following graduation from Birmingham University, she worked as a Probation Officer in a variety of settings in the West Midlands and then Merseyside. Interest in the significance of early experiences in the formation of a child's character and on life chances led to the move to work with children and families and so in 1997 she moved to the Family Court Welfare Service, later to become the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support service (CAFCASS) where she worked as a Family Court Advisor until she joined Liverpool Hope University in September 2002.

Faith Line joined the Early Years team at Liverpool Hope

University in September 2003 following a part-time secondment with the local education authority as an Early Years Teacher Advisor. Her extensive teaching experience stretches over 27 years in Primary education, the last 13 of which had an Early Years focus.

Kathleen Orlandi is part of the undergraduate Early Years team at Liverpool Hope, and leads the PGCE for Foundation Stage/Key Stage One students. She began her career in a London Comprehensive school where she was Head of Geography Department, and a Head of Year. In the late 1980's she transferred to the North West and to the Primary sector, and developed a keen interest in the Early Years, in which she was involved until joining Liverpool Hope in January 2003.

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18. Developing an institutional approach to 'Every Child Matters'.

Angela Milner: Edge Hill.

Summary

Each Higher Education Institution is developing its own institutional approach to 'Every Child Matters' agenda: Change for Children Outcomes Framework (DfES, 2004) and the educational, training and development opportunities it provides. This paper provides a brief case study of one Higher Education Institution's initial approach to this significant change agenda and its attempts at effective practice. The paper identifies practical approaches taken to incorporating this significant and changing legislation into institutional provision and the opportunities and challenges that responding to this agenda can present.

Key Words

Institutional / 'Every Child Matters' / change agenda / effective practice / collaboration

Introduction and Context for the Development

This paper provides a brief case study into one Higher Educational Institution's (HEI) initial approach to academic developments in relation to the 'Every Child Matters': Change for Children Outcomes Framework. The 'Every Child Matters' related legislation and resultant policy and training initiatives create a huge vision and a significant change agenda over the next decade for all who work to support children and young people, their families and carers and a similar but different agenda, for HEIs keen to respond to this training and development opportunity. This opportunity is likely to involve HEIs in replicating the types of structures and methods of working together that are currently beginning to happen in local authorities and between different national agencies, in order to provide appropriate training, development and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities, award bearing academic provision and research, consultancy and knowledge transfer activity within an increasingly multi- disciplinary context.

The case study institution is a large HEI in the North West of England that has recently gained university status, which is currently organised into three distinctive Faculties based on the vocational areas of Education and Health and increasingly vocational and diversified provision in a Faculty of Humanities, Management, Science and Applied Social Science. Directorate level initiated development began with a nominated cross Faculty academic development group of colleagues, with relevant expertise meeting to look at a potential response for the institution in June and August 2005 and the creation of an institutional Core Project Group and Project Leader role in August 2005 to kick start developments for the period September 2005 - December 2005. It was seen as essential that the institution positioned itself appropriately in relation to this high priority academic development agenda and that Faculties and existing Central support areas planned both for the validation of relevant programmes during spring 2006 and for their initial delivery from September

2006 as well as beginning to consider a more strategic approach to the opportunities presented. For some areas of the institution, this was part of their continued evolution and development, but for others it would take them on a new journey into the world of professional standards and into new areas of more vocationally orientated provision for the first time. It was important to recognise that it was unlikely that one particular approach would be appropriate across all three very different Faculties, each with their own structures and cultures. For example some areas within Faculties might utilise existing research strengths in providing more tailor made Level 3 and Level 4 CPD provision to meet short term needs and demands from the existing Children's Workforce, working within existing CPD accreditation frameworks whereas others would focus on the extension of Foundation Degrees or full time Honours Degree provision to meet the needs of the future Children's Workforce. The pressure for innovation and change in Higher Education is enormous with constant changes in relation to this agenda from Government, specific agencies, curriculum and local authorities, professional bodies, voluntary agencies and a huge range of vested interests. The management of such a key change agenda involves familiar Higher Education themes such as improvement, ideas, innovation and implementation and creates both its own challenge and an important opportunity. The key to such successful developments lies in focusing on the potential this change creates, rather than on the change itself and in finding ways to work together to respond to the challenge and the opportunity. Hannan and Silver (2000) make the important distinction between individuals who innovate and change, and institutions who manage innovation. Sustainable development will have been judged to have taken place only when the people involved have changed and developed as a result of their engagement with the process. This paper describes the start of this process.

Creation of an institutional Core Project Group and a Children's Agenda Project Leader role

An identified individual was approached by Directorate and asked if they would undertake a designated project leader role to kick start developments. The agreed responsibilities ascribed to the role were to:

ensure an effective institutional response to the 'Every Child Matters' Agenda by developing a cross- institutional framework of relevant new academic provision, acting as institutional contact internally and externally, disseminating the wealth of documentation available and ensuring institutional representation on appropriate national/ regional groups.

The Core Project Group

A Core Project Group was established to act as an academic development steering group, exchanging information and working together on a number of key areas identified at the initial meeting, which considered its roles, responsibilities and the principles underpinning the development of new provision in relation to 'Every Child Matters': Change for Children. The following remit was agreed. To:

- ♦ Establish the institution's current response to 'Every Child Matters' and the Children's Workforce Strategy;
- ♦ Agree a Framework, response in which Faculties could work to validate programmes to match requirements working within existing institutional structures and systems;
- ♦ Establish academic and administrative and management structures and support systems to support these new developments;
- ♦ Conduct risk assessment exercises to facilitate the development of activities to match the specific needs and requirements;
- ♦ Engage in academic and business planning for new developments, linking the Framework to decisions in relation to the Academic Planning Committee schedule, budget schedule, investments and central resources e.g. marketing;
- ♦ Communicate up to date and accurate information to all involved, including the need for differentiated and flexible approaches to a continually developing agenda;
- ♦ Develop and coordinate an effective Core Project Team who would receive support from those with responsibility for dealing with associated accountability and performance issues;
- ♦ Provide quality management and enhancement tools as part of the planning, focusing on high quality programmes and learning experiences for a wide range of stakeholders;
- ♦ Establish confidence, shared expectations and goals amongst a Core group of people who want to make this happen and a wider group who may be less

enthusiastic, but need to be involved;

- ♦ Provide appropriate levels of information support, training and staff development to achieve the above.

The Core Project Group agreed the following methods of working with each other:

- ♦ A commitment to attending meetings within a schedule determined by diaries and timeframes;
- ♦ Adoption of an Action Planning and target setting approach to the agenda;
- ♦ The development of success criteria to measure performance against, with clear actors and appropriate monitoring and accountability;
- ♦ Achievement of agreed SMART targets within timescales;
- ♦ Agreement of key people involved and appropriate release and support provided for them by their managers
- ♦ Involvement of key players who wanted to make this happen.

The institutional expectations for the Core Project Group were to:

- ♦ Develop an action plan for the academic year 2005/06 (within the context of a wider and more strategic institutional framework response);
- ♦ Facilitate structures and communication systems to ensure a continuing response to what would be an ever changing agenda;
- ♦ Be able to offer new Honours degree level provision as part of the academic portfolio;
- ♦ Identify a range of new or modified existing provision at Foundation Degree, Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels that would match stakeholder needs;
- ♦ Bring forward outline proposals from the Group for initial consideration at the October 2005 Academic Planning Committee meeting in the form of a development paper;
- ♦ Bring forward formal Initial Approval documentation, through Faculties, to the November and December 2005 Academic Planning Committee meetings;
- ♦ Plan and run an internal staff conference on November 2nd 2005 to raise institutional awareness of 'Every Child Matters';
- ♦ Ensure that the best use was made of all relevant internal and external expertise through the use of an institutional audit of expertise and collation of the resultant data;
- ♦ Ensure regular communication with Deans, Academic Managers and the Director of Academic Affairs in relation to 'Every Child Matters'.

The group's remit, composition and membership were agreed with representation of two members from each Faculty, with a Dean or Associate Dean stepping in to ensure each Faculty was always represented and a

Developing an institutional approach to 'Every Child Matters'.

wider group of Academic Managers receiving information via an 'Every Child Matters' email distribution group. The Children's Agenda Project Leader reported directly to the Director of Academic Affairs on a weekly basis and the following developmental timeline for the project was determined.

Months	What needed to happen
September 2005	2 meetings of Core Project Group to agree framework and outline paper for Academic Planning Committee (APC) Audit of potential within Faculties Agreement of key principles and developmental framework Creation of 2005-6 Action Plan for each Faculty and across the institution
October 2005	APC approval for developments 2 meetings of Core Project Group
November 2005	Faculties to work within existing institutional frameworks to produce Initial Approval Proformas (IAPs) for APC approval and plan developments in line with agreements and institutional validation schedule launched by November 2nd Conference Individual audits 2 meetings of Core Project Group
December 2005	Phased start of IAPs for APC approval Marketing of new courses 2 meetings of Core Project Group Review of success in relation to achievements so far and decisions made about the need for the continuation of the group & the project leader role

Table 1: What needed to happen

Administrative support was provided centrally for the work of the group, to facilitate a clearinghouse for disseminating information and ensuring appropriate staff development opportunities could be provided. It was essential that the institution had one clear point of contact to answer enquiries and work with partners to develop provision to match their needs and a start was made in compiling an appropriate database of stakeholder contacts. This process began with letters distributed to the twenty-five national organisations that had subscribed to the 'Children's Agenda' to establish useful contacts and links in the region and with the creation of academic development groups containing partner stakeholders being convened in the Faculties of Health and Education.

Papers were produced and briefing sessions were provided for key internal individuals and groups; to raise awareness of this new development and the processes and timeframes involved, to enable colleagues to contextualise these developments and allow for the involvement of a range of both internal and external stakeholders. Emphasis was placed at these events and in the documentation produced, on the need to respond flexibly to the continually developing agenda,

announcements and legislation, to ensure the institution produced programmes that met not only current, but developing and future needs in a strategic and responsive manner and on the identification of provision which met the necessary academic and professional requirements. It was essential to ensure everyone was working with stakeholders to develop training programmes that would meet existing and developing needs for training Practitioners for the Children's Workforce both in terms of CPD and initial training for aspiring members of this workforce and to ensure we could provide relevant qualifications that were delivered in the most appropriate locations and in a range of appropriate delivery modes to meet the needs of new and developing markets and to enable the institution to work within a multi-disciplinary context, rather than a distinct individual disciplinary education and training context. This approach would acknowledge different disciplinary traditions but would also recognise there would eventually be new and distinctive roles and career structures to match this agenda e.g. Early Years Professional Status. Internally two key processes were initiated. The first was the auditing of existing expertise using three audit tools provided as appendices to this paper. Appendix 1 the academic development model audit was used with individuals to seek their views on this development. Appendix 2 the Faculty audit tool was used to assess the potential of expanding the existing academic portfolio and Appendix 3 which was designed to capture cross institutional interest and expertise in relation to specific aspects of the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge (DfES 2005) requirements and to create a detailed register of institutional expertise that could be available for a range of consultancy activities.

The second of these key processes was awareness raising. The Children's Agenda Project Leader spoke to key individuals and groups, provided briefing sessions for teams and regularly communicated up to date information across the institution. Staff development sessions and materials were provided for colleagues and this process culminated in an institutional awareness raising conference held in November 2005, the outline programme for which is provided in Appendix 4.

Despite the very tight timeframes the agreed expectations were met and during the Spring Term 2006 a range of new academic provision related to 'Every Child Matters' has been successfully validated and a specifically designed marketing strategy plan has been rolled out related to the agreed action plan for 2005-6 with the following headings:

Objective	Action required to achieve objective	Milestones	Responsible Actor	Responsible actor for monitoring	Action or Support required from the Faculty / Institution
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Table 2: Headings

What was actually achieved?

Development of an action plan for the academic year 2005-6;

- ♦ Facilitation of structures and communication systems to ensure a continuing response to 'Every Child Matters';
- ♦ The ability to offer new Honours degree provision related to the agenda;
- ♦ Identification of a range of new or modified existing provision at FD, UG and PG levels;
- ♦ Production of required developmental papers and support and advice about the appropriateness of proposals for Academic Planning Committee;
- ♦ Formal initial approval documentation approved and programmes validated;
- ♦ Very positively received staff development conference and response to audit requests;
- ♦ A better understanding of knowledge and expertise held by individuals and teams that was relevant to the agenda;
- ♦ Regular communication with Deans, Academic Managers and Director of Academic Affairs with a high priority given to this agenda throughout the institution.

What has happened since December 2005?

The Core Project Group has become the 'Every Child Matters' Group and has continued to meet twice termly to exchange and update relevant information, with the Director of Academic Affairs acting as chair. Its main task now is to advise on a medium-term action plan for the further academic development of institutional provision. Six institutional professorial posts have been advertised in April 2006 and three of these have been linked to the 'Every Child Matters' Agenda. A joint appointment of a Children's Development Workforce Coordinator post has been made with one of the regional Strategic Health Authorities to improve the links between Higher Education and training and development opportunities for Health colleagues within the region. An extensive range of new provision has been validated and is now being marketed. All three Faculties and the institutional Academic Development Plan for 2006-9 relate specifically to this agenda and continuing meetings are planned with Associate Deans responsible for academic developments to ensure collaboration takes place as and when appropriate.

In the Faculty of Education provision has been diversified to meet the requirements of 'Every Child Matters' through the creation of three new Foundation Degree and Undergraduate top up programmes in Early Years Leadership, Education with a QTS pathway and Practice for aspiring practitioners, within the context of providing needs assessment and accreditation opportunities for training and development for the wider school workforce involved in the parallel Remodelling the Workforce and

Extended Schools agendas. 'Every Child Matters' has also featured heavily in the highly successful recent Primary and Early Years short Ofsted inspection process emulating the centrality of the revised Ofsted Inspection Frameworks for settings, schools, Colleges and ITT providers in relation to this agenda. Changes have been made to the ITT curricula to match 'Every Child Matters' and to ensure every trainee is aware of the range of issues, likely changes to their roles and different career opportunities that will exist. The final publication of new professional standards and planned revalidations in 2006-7 will complete this process. Requests for consultancy and bids for research and knowledge transfer activities in relation to 'Every Child Matters' have met with success and strategic partnerships have been formed with a number of Early Years and Childcare teams in particular local authorities to provide appropriate accredited CPD opportunities for the Children's Workforce.

Wider implications

An important start has been made on what will now become a continuing journey of significance and importance to the institution; with one high profile short-term development used to kick start more strategic developments. A vision and institutional commitment to the agenda now exists, but needs to be developed across the wider institutional educational academic community. Information is more widely shared and everyone involved is more aware of individual and collaborative activities and opportunities and of the pockets of expertise that have been identified within existing institutional structures and systems. Research from other areas of the educational world involved in collaborative projects and inter-Faculty working (Tett, 2005, Huxham, 1996, Nixon and Ranson, 1997, Bohan and Stiles, 1998) indicates the difficulties associated with working in this way:

Interagency work is difficult and change requires time, resources and commitment to building a meta-strategy that will allow all relevant interest groups to find a way forward. (Tett, 2005)

There are inbuilt difficulties and tensions for academic colleagues and professionals working outside of their normal comfort zone, academic discipline and/ or professional culture to consider alongside the usual range of differing priorities and practice which govern our work and help to distinguish one academic tradition and/ or profession from another. Academic and professional identity in Higher Education has traditionally been based first around an academic discipline, then a department or Faculty and then the institution. The importance of respecting and sharing the distinct academic and professional knowledge bases that can be brought together appropriately to meet needs in this context where there has previously been limited opportunities for

members of different academic and professional groups to either train and/or work together can not be underestimated and the significance of distinct professional identities and perceptions and stereotypical views can not be ignored in this process.

Our best development intentions may be complicated not only by the complexity of the organisations within which we work but also by our colleagues' prior experience, habituated practices and assumptions.'
(Matthew and Land 2005)

To advance our institutional mission we will need to continue to build understanding and trust and engage in effective and sustained collaborative working. We will also need to look beyond Higher Education at successful models of collaborative practice. Atkinson et al. (2005) have identified a range of factors impeding or facilitating multi agency working, involving professionals from the Education, Social Services and Health sectors of local authorities, who are also working together in an inter disciplinary way for the first time. Their model, Table 3, creates a useful checklist to reassure providers that such new ways of working will not be easily achieved, identifying eight key challenges and seven key success factors, which they have prioritised in rank order, which provide food for thought for all HEI colleagues.

Key Challenges	Success Criteria
Fiscal resources	Commitment or willingness to be involved
Roles and responsibilities	Understanding roles and responsibilities
Competing priorities	Common aims and objectives
Non-fiscal resources	Communication and information sharing
Communication	Leadership or drive
Professional and Agency cultures	Involving the relevant personnel
Management	Sharing and access to funding and resources
Training opportunities	

Table 3: NFER Research Study Model

'Every Child Matters' requires new levels of professional understanding and training and development for those working within the Children's Workforce that will provide experience of other agencies. Each of these has its own service culture, structure, discourse and priorities. Higher Education Institutions are also working to overcome the same hurdles and beginning to work in similar ways.

The proof of the pudding in the short term now lies with the successful recruitment to new programmes for September 2006, but in the longer term in the construction of a more strategic action plan and in the institution's ability to continue to respond to the planned

changes that will take place to meet the Children's Workforce needs during the period between now and 2015. However, the success of any educational innovation will be dependent upon its transformational and sustainable nature, rather than its immediate or superficial success. Effective and logical academic development strategies have been put in to practice, but far more than this will be required to continue to anticipate requirements, overcome obstacles and sustain changes over time at an institutional level.

Biography

Angela Milner is Senior Associate Dean (Quality, Academic Standards, Developments and Research) within the Faculty of Education at Edge Hill University. Angela is an Early Years specialist who acted and was a member of the DfES working party that developed Early Years sector endorsed Foundation Degrees. She has contributed to TDA/ DfES /CWDC discussions about the development of Early Years Professional Standards and is Edge Hill University's Children's Agenda Project Leader. Angela is extensively involved in consultancy work and supporting practitioner research with local authorities involved in the roll out of 'Every Child Matters' and has led the development of three new Foundation Degree Pathways in Early Years Leadership, Education and Practice during 2005-06.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: The 'Every Child Matters' Academic Development model for auditing and developing a framework/ action plan

Key Questions

1. What should our response to this potential initiative be?
2. Why does this seem an important initiative for us?
3. What potential do we already have to respond?
4. What potential could we have to respond?
5. What would be the practical /logistical implications if we did?
6. Who are the internal and external key players in relation to this potential initiative?
7. Who are our potential partners in any of these initiatives and do we need to pull together their contact details?
8. What types of delivery modes would we be interested in providing in response to these potential training initiatives?
10. When would we need to have a potential response available for?
11. What would this mean to the different areas of our institution?

12. What do we have to offer now and in the future?

13. What actions will people take away from the initial meeting?

14. What is the role of the Core Project Group?

Appendix 2.

	Faculty of Education	Faculty of Health	Faculty of HMSAS
Current Practice			
What do we currently do related to the Children's Agenda?			
What are our strengths?			
What potential do we have that could be easily utilised?			
Ideal Short Term Response			
How would we like to respond?			
How do we read the runes?			
How can we be best prepared to respond to the short-term initiatives available or opportunities there may be to bid for /develop?			
Potential Medium Term Response			
What vision do we have for these developments?			
What investment would be needed to support this?			
What are the potential challenges?			

Developing an institutional approach to 'Every Child Matters'.

Potential Long Term Response			
How does the response to this agenda become an integral part of our institution?			
How do we become a first choice and high quality provider in relation to these developments?			
How is this communicated to everyone involved internally and externally?			

Development of young people				
Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child				
Legal and procedural frameworks				
Supporting transitions in childhood and youth				
How children and young people respond to change				
When and how to intervene				
Multi-agency working				
Assertiveness				
The law, policies and procedures				
Child health				
Physical health of children and young people				
Mental health of children and young people				
Emotional health of children and young people				
Sexual health				
Healthy lifestyles				
Drug abuse				
Alcohol abuse				
Keeping children and young people safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation				
Health and safety to avoid accidental injury and death				
Bullying				
Discrimination				
Criminal and antisocial behaviour in and out of school				
School readiness				
School phobia refusal and avoidance				
Truancy				
Raising national educational standards in primary school				
Raising national educational standards in secondary school				
Personal and social development of children and young people				
Improving recreational and leisure activities for children and young people				
Promoting positive behaviour				
Children/young people's involvement in decision making				
Children/young people's involvement in supporting the community				

Appendix 3

In order for us to fully meet the 'Every Child Matters': Change for Children agenda, we need to audit the existing areas of knowledge, experience or qualifications of as many staff as possible. Please could you assist us by completing the following questionnaire and returning it by email to your Faculty's contact by November 18th.

Angela Milner in Education milnera@edgehill.ac.uk
 Sue Palmer in HMSAS palmers@edgehill.ac.uk
 Brenda Roberts in Health robertsb@edgehill.ac.uk

Thanks for your co-operation

Dr Sue Palmer, Associate Dean TLA & SSG, HMSAS

Please indicate where you have professional experience/subject knowledge/expertise

Name: Dept: Tel: email:	Professional qualifications	Subject knowledge	Practical experience	External contacts
ECM skills, knowledge and framework				
Effective communication and engagement with children				
Effective communication and engagement with young people				
Effective communication and engagement with parents				
Confidentiality and ethics				
Sources of support				
Importance of respect				
Child development				

Children/young people's involvement in the environment				
Children/young people engaging in law-abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school				
Children/young people developing positive relationships				
Developing self confidence in children/young people				
Developing the ability to deal with significant life changes and challenges in children/young people				
Developing enterprising behaviour in children/young people				
Employability in young people				
Developing career awareness skills in young people				
Choices after 16				
Parenting education				
Household budget planning				

Any other area of experience/expertise/knowledge e.g. children's charities etc.

Existing modules/CPD/short courses already validated or planned.

External contacts who may be able to inform our developments or become customers for our provision.

Appendix 4 Awareness Raising Conference

'Every Child Matters': Change for Children. Why does this matter for Edge Hill? Change for Edge Hill?
2nd November 2005 in E1 Faculty of Education Building

Purpose

- ♦ To raise awareness of the issues associated with 'Every Child Matters': Change for Children, the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce, the Children's Workforce Strategy (DfES, 2005 and 2006) and strategic developments in relation to schools, Social Care and the Criminal Justice System
- ♦ To consider Edge Hill's strategic response and the impact this agenda will have on us as individuals, our colleagues, the institution, our partner stakeholders and the areas within which we work in the short, medium and long term
- ♦ To disseminate a vision for developing a cross institutional framework of new academic provision at Foundation Degree and where appropriate Undergraduate Honours and Postgraduate Level

Target Audience

Directorate, Deans of Faculty, Associate Deans, key institutional academic and service area managers, a maximum of 20 delegates from each Faculty, delegates from Central Service areas and AMG

Programme

9 am Registration, refreshments and picking up of delegate packs in Faculty of Education Foyer

9:15 am Welcome, Introduction and Purpose of the Event: Directorate

9:30 am Key note address: 'Every Child Matters': Change for Children and questions

10:30am

Why does this matter for Edge Hill? Change for Edge Hill? Directorate

Expectations and Aspirations: Developing an Edge Hill response Angela Milner, Senior Associate Dean, Faculty of Education and Children's Agenda Project Leader

Introduction of Task for after coffee

11:00 am Coffee in Foyer

11:15 am The Key Questions: How and what should Edge Hill's response be? What are the expectations and aspirations? What strengths and expertise do we have? What opportunities / challenges does this create? How can we best respond as an institution? What will need to be in place to achieve this? What will your role be in making this happen?

12:30 pm Plenary and Evaluations and further contact details followed by departure and lunch

Glossary of acronyms.

AEO	Area Education Officer
AfL	Assessment for Learning
AST	Advanced Skills Teacher
CAIPE	Centre for Advancement in Interprofessional Education
CAT	Credit and Accumulation scheme
CCCU	Canterbury Christ Church University
CMC	Computer Mediated Communication
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPM	Creative Partnerships Merseyside
CWDC	The Children's Workforce Development Council
DB	Discussion Board
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DfES	Department of Education and Skills
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EC	European Community
ECM	Every Child Matter
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
GTCE	General Teaching Council for England
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HLTA	Higher Level Teaching Assistant
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IPE	Inter-professional Education
IPL	Inter-professional Learning
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
ITET	Initial Teacher Education and Training
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
IWB	Interactive Whiteboard
JAR	Joint Area Review
LA	Local Authority
LEA	Local Education Authority
LEO	Local Education Officer
MSN	MicroSoft Network
NACCCE	National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education
NCSL	National College of School Leadership
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headteachers
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
PDA	Personal Digital Assistant
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PPD	Postgraduate Professional Development
PPT	PowerPoint
PTL	Partnership Team Leader
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
RSC	Regional Steering Committee
SBT	School-Based Tutor
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SfCC	Schools facing Challenging Circumstance
SWELTEC	South West London Teacher Education Consortium
TDA	Training and Development Agency for schools
TTA	Teacher Training Agency
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

Teacher Education Futures: Developing Learning and Teaching in ITE across the UK

ISBN 1-905788-26-6
December 2006

ESCalate @ Bristol

We have a continuing policy of responding to consultation and advice. We invite you to participate in shaping ESCalate's future direction and activity.

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