

## Networked Learning Conference 2002

CONTRIBUTION TO SYMPOSIUM ON: ***Methodologies for researching networked learning***

TITLE OF PAPER: ***Educational technology: managing research, managing interests - research choices and their implications***

AUTHOR: ***Laura Czerniewicz***

INSTITUTION: ***Multimedia Education Group, University of Cape Town***

SESSION TYPE: ***Symposium***

NAME AND ADDRESS OF CONTACT PERSON: ***Laura Czerniewicz,  
Multimedia Education Group, University of Cape Town,  
Private Bag Rondebosch 7700, Cape Town, South Africa***

TELEPHONE: ***27 21 650 5036***

EMAIL: ***lcz@ched.uct.ac.za***

NUMBER OF WORDS: ***Abstract = 343 words***

FIVE KEY WORDS: ***research choices implications managing interests***

## ABSTRACT

Educational technology: managing research, managing interests - research choices and their implications

Research in education is never easy, in educational technology is particularly tricky. But the problems do not lie simply in the methodologies; they arise earlier when trying to answer the age-old questions "Who is the research for?" and "What is its purpose?" An educational technology unit in "an African world class university" committed to redress and equity, manages quite distinctive positions and pressures. We find ourselves at the intersection of sets of competing demands, and having to mediate a set of compromises that satisfactorily meet enough of the various parties' requirements.

The paper will explore the tensions caused by the key stakeholders. It will describe donors' requirements, the needs of different parties within the university and the ideas and interests of different academics both within and outside of the educational technology unit. Given that these themselves are not homogenous groupings, there are conflicting interests between planners, policy makers and academic researchers; academic development interests and other academic interests; departmental interests as well as the tensions between organisational short term and longer-term requirements.

This paper will describe the specific tensions within the context itself and their implications for research decisions. It acknowledges that an educational technology unit in an African context finds itself playing multiple roles, each of which pressurises the unit to respond in different ways.

It will then explore the way that the interests of the different groupings have serious implications for both the content of research and its focus, as well as for the choice of appropriate research methodologies. Thus there is a pressure to function on a methodology continuum ranging from quantitative research methods including surveys and control group experiments to qualitative methods such as ethnographic interrogations. It will examine the challenges of these key educational technology methodologies both intrinsically as well as in the light of the different audiences.

And finally, the paper will touch on the implications that these different research choices have for the unit itself in terms of skills, theoretical position and internal coherence.