

## **Biographical data**

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Paper Outline: (Individual research paper submission)

### **Developments in generative learning using a collaborative learning environment**

#### **Abstract**

This paper describes and reflects upon the development of an on-line module 'Contexts for Teacher Education' for the Ed.D in Teacher Education at the University of Nottingham. This development has provided the course organisers with an opportunity to explore and research on-line collaborative and generative learning (Grabinger, 1997). The course attracts both UK and overseas students and consists of four taught modules followed by an equivalent period of research leading to a thesis. The taught modules aim to provide opportunities to develop an understanding of the main principles and issues underlying Teacher Education and the research agendas that accompany these. During the taught sessions students are introduced to the research skills and methodologies they need in order to complete their research and they are provided with opportunities to further develop and articulate their own research agendas in preparation for the research phase of the course.

The paper presents the rationale for the pedagogic approach taken in developing the module and also for the collaborative approach used to develop the course. A key feature was the need to develop an understanding amongst the academics developing the module of what added value the process of on-line learning might bring for both tutors and students, and the paper describes how this awareness was achieved. 'Education is about the experiences of the learners' (Waterhouse, 1990 p52) and a central consideration was the need to recognise the skills and knowledge that the

students bring to the course and therefore to manage the learning process in order to organise, develop and utilise these as a key resource.

The paper reflects upon the pedagogic model underlying the module and on how a combination of tools provided in WebCT, together with WebQuests and a collaborative learning environment (CLE), is used to support the approach. WebCT can tend to organise learning materials in a somewhat linear and teacher-centred format, but the use of WebQuests and the CLE add a student-centred enquiry focus. The capabilities of the CLE which was developed by the University of Melbourne, Australia are being further extended for this module as part of a joint funded project with the University of Nottingham.

The CLE enables the tutor to 'tightly'(Jones et al, 2000) organise the collaborative learning for the students and allows them to submit documents for peer review. It also allows the students to work together and share their knowledge of, in this case, their own teacher education programs and generate an agreed framework for critically analysing them. This framework is created through an on-line Delphi process using a web form within the CLE and a bulletin board in WebCT. It is then used to critically analyse a wide range of teacher education programs, in the context of which students present an analysis of their home programmes. These then become a new resource within the module for use by current and future cohorts.

A discussion of the differences between this tool and other online tools used for collaborative learning is included in the paper together with the notion that 'new' collaborative pedagogies are being enabled by the Internet and associated technologies.

#### **References:**

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