

**My proposal would be categorised as  
"Student experiences of networked learning".**

I would like to discuss and raise issues on the **online learners' experience**, which in many cases may be very hard and tough, even though very interesting. In fact, in my opinion, only by hearing about learners' experience as well as discussing it, online tutors can make up strategies which are more focused and efficient to meet the learners' needs. I would propose such a theme because I would like to know what researchers, teachers, lecturers, online tutors and students think and feel about it. Other reasons which made me choose this topic follow here:

I did a MSc in Adult and Continuing Education at University of Glasgow during the year 2000-2001, and I had my first online learning experience on the online module "New Technology and Lifelong Learning" (NTLL). This course may be thought of representing the so called *Integrated Model*. To use Mason's definition (1998),

*"the course consists of collaborative activities, learning resources and joint assignments. The heart of the course takes place online through discussion, accessing and processing information and carrying out tasks. The course contents are fluid and dynamic as they are largely determined by the individual and group activity. In a sense, the integrated model dissolves the distinction between content and support, and is dependent on the creation of a learning community"*

(Mason, 1998,  
[http://www.aln.org/alnweb/magazine/vol2\\_issue2/Masonfinal.htm](http://www.aln.org/alnweb/magazine/vol2_issue2/Masonfinal.htm)).

At the beginning I was very frustrated with the course and I did not understand the reasons why in the literature review there is such an enthusiasm about the new technologies. It took me more than three months to get used to this radically new online environment. During that time I did not feel comfortable in interacting online with my course-mates and my tutors. Moreover, I missed the face-to-face aspect of communication.

Additionally, I found it very hard to log onto the web-board everyday, read all of what seemed like overwhelming messages, desperately try to follow the thread of the discussion, and to understand what my real thoughts were and then to express them online.

**All this psychological, mental and intellectual effort, all the frustration and anxiety which the new environment brought me about, made me wonder whether I was learning or not and to what extent I was learning in terms of quality. What was the sense, on a pedagogical level, of all that struggle?**

Therefore, I decided to undertake a dissertation on online learning whose title is: **"Enabling Lifelong Learning: is Online Learning a way forward?"**. In other words: **"May the new technologies increase the quality of learning? And, if yes, to what extent?"**. I also undertook seven qualitative in-depth interviews to the students on NTLL. These interviews were a very small sample but gave me the opportunity to deepen my understanding of online learning and its issues more than I would have done if I had counted on my own learning experience on the course only. The whole process of personally being on an online course and writing the dissertation was fascinating. The interview focused on some areas such as

confidence/anxiety/motivations, ease of access/perception of 'anytime', online relationships, web-board, online team-work/collaborative learning, evaluation of the online course as a whole and awareness of the learning process.

The findings of the research are, in my opinion, very interesting and I would present them at the Conference, should my Proposal be taken into consideration successfully.