A Study of Work-Based Learning Models and Partnership in Support of Post-Compulsory Programmes of Teacher Education.

Professor Gerry McAleavy
Ms Celia O'Hagan
Dr Ted Fleming

The project has been successfully completed and the objective of bringing about constructive liaison between the North and South in relation to teacher education in the work based learning sector was achieved through a range of initial discussions at University of Ulster and Dublin Institute of technology and further surveys, online debate and discussion. This process culminated in a North South conference at the Ballymacscanlon Hotel at Dundalk on 15th December 2008 which was attended by representatives from the General Teaching Council from the North and the Teaching Council in the South as well as LSDA, LLUKNI representatives and policymakers. These discussions are ongoing and are designed to achieve joint recognition of the university programmes, under the emerging rubric, for work based teacher education in the North and South.

The debate initiated by the project has informed the following policy developments:

- In the South the Teaching Council (TC) is now reviewing the required standards for a mandatory vocational teacher education programme which will commence in 2013.
- In the North the General Teaching Council (GTC) is reviewing and examining the role of work based learning teachers.

- Members of the project have been involved in discussions with both the GTC and the TC.

- A website has been set up to facilitate discussions among teacher educators: http://www.ulster.ac.uk/lll/scotens/

- The development and implementation of a new module on mentoring, (Mentoring for Performance Improvement) will contribute to the process of preparing staff in colleges to support new teachers.

Introduction

The University of Ulster has a longstanding commitment to pedagogical education for learning professionals, working to improve skills in further education, community and workplace learning contexts. It is of key importance that this resource offers added value and that the professionals are capable of comprehending and utilising creative and innovative approaches to education and training, including the advancement of new technologies, to provide high quality skills education to the standards specified by the Lifelong Learning Sector Skills Council. Research directed towards supporting the Training for Success initiative in Northern Ireland together with the Assemblies vision for community development, social cohesion and the development of workforce competence by 2010 and skills enhancement for employability (Bain, 2006; Leitch, 2006; Tomlinson, 2004) will be developed through a centre for excellence. The centre will offer opportunities for collaborative research designed to inform effective skills development for professionals working in vocational contexts and those providing outreach and access for post-14 learners including hard to reach young people in order to support the economic vision for sustainability and empowerment, and the reduction of disadvantage North and South of Ireland (NI Executive, 2008). Centres and institutes for education and training require support in advancing this vision to enable them to make a difference economically and globally (McAleavy & O'Hagan, 2003), supporting the strategic policies of the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) and the Department of Education and Science (DES) in relation to enterprise development and the promotion of inclusion (Osborne & Shuttleworth, 2004) through offering economic opportunities to excluded groups (McAleavy et al, 2001).

The project will be informed by the workforce development needs in the sectors (O'Hagan et al., 2005) designated by government as the STEM (DEL, 2007) and priority skill areas (DEL, 2008; DES, 2008).

The University in working with key partners has established collaborative research and development opportunities with Dublin Institute of Technology which is a multi-level provider of education and training programmes and engages actively in research projects and initiatives focused on skills research and sustainable education and development. Limerick and Sligo work with the University partners to support IT development in SMEs through eLearning. Social enterprise education and training sector activities in Cork are paralleled at Ulster with original research for the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (McAleavy et al, 2001). Letterkenny facilitates Ulster already in developing technology enhanced learning opportunities in meeting the needs of the North West of the province. Galway works closely with industry, (Xerox), business and the public sector (FAS, army, police, air traffic control, Youthreach) and with Ulster in supporting economic development through re-training adults in the rural west. Maynooth is central to the development of adult and continuing education and work with the Ulster partners historically on research and enterprise links, most currently through a shared project funded by the standing conference on Teacher Education for workbased learning and flexible routes to the development of learning professionals with a skills focus in RoI.

The partners have, therefore, established records of sustainable research and consultancy over a period of 15 years in their niche skills research areas which include vocational education/training throughout the skills spectrum (Ulster), agri/financial skills development in social enterprise (Cork), public service and industrial quality enhancement (Galway) and enterprise and design (Letterkenny, Limerick, Sligo). Currently the partners have ongoing consultancy contracts and developing research - informed teaching programmes targeted at promoting skills and enterprise development through inclusion of marginalised populations on a geodemographic basis. Sustainability will continue through such sources and through links with the University Lifelong Learning developments such as the

Certificate in Personal and Professional Development offering opportunities for training and outreach to grow and advance with key partners.

The education and training sectors in the North, South, East and West of Ireland bring together all provision that delivers or supports learning and knowledge management for young people over 14 and adults. Expertise from DIT from the existing UNESCO-UNEVOC centre will come together to support the advancement of scholarship in the field of vocational and technical skills training. Skills research centres from each institution will support the work of many projects in the area of vocational education and training from partner institutions. The University of Ulster teacher education and training projects, funded by government, and recent seed funding initiatives such as the SCoTENs project will enhance opportunities for sustainable developments in the future. This project aims to support the close networking of research experts in this field in order to develop closer alliances and improve standards in the future supporting training for work and the development of sustainable futures.

The purpose of the project is to support sectors through advanced learning and professional skills to develop a flexible skills-based curriculum suitable for all learners throughout their lives, to enable providers to have knowledge and skills to enable them to:

- develop individual capability and industrial capacity through learning beyond work
- support learners with the high value skills necessary to enter employment and develop enterprise skills for the future
- address barriers to participation in relation to gender, ethnicity, geodemographic position, age and disability;
- ensure the effective application of new technologies to learning;
- encourage autonomy in learning within the workplace and the progress of learners within employment to acquire leadership skills;
- develop innovative and creative approaches to skills acquisition and application

- be ensure that learners at all levels become informed, discerning and contributing individuals, parents and citizens in advancing goals of social and sustainable responsibility
- support the vision of a shared society north and south through education and training

Aims and Objectives

Aims

The role of research, education and training providers is central to the effective development and acquisition of skills and the promotion of enterprise in the North and South of Ireland. In Northern Ireland the formal post 14 skills sector is largely supported by the new, six area-based, Colleges of Further Education. The informal sector is served by the Colleges and its extended training provider partners including community education and training organisations. In the Republic of Ireland the FE Collegse and VEC bodies operate a similar formal system, with a hugely diverse arrangement within the local and regional organisations meeting the needs of adult and community education and skills training.

This project is designed to collectively develop support infrastructures for the skills professionals who work within our education, training and community partner groups and networks by opening up opportunities for the improvement of skills training among professionals through initial and continued educational development.

Using available eLearning platforms partners will support the development of new collaborations and curriculum frameworks for the training of our professionals in the North and South providing opportunities for close liaison with research experts and teams on both sides of the border.

Objectives

This project will build on seed funding and expertise available through a SCoTENs project and other such funding from EU and government departments at UU, DIT and other partner organisations:

1. To establish a cross-border education and training research centre of excellence in support of workforce development.
2. To enhance opportunities for shared scholarship and the appraisal of professional standards in support of economic skills training and employability.
3. To address widening participation, lifelong learning and skills development across the Island of Ireland through research collaboration.
4. To research the development of effective models of practice for professional educators and trainers operating in a range of community, voluntary and FE sectors.
5. To provide dissemination opportunities for ROI and Northern Ireland providers through research collaboration on an international basis.
6. To provide a research-focused infrastructure in support of creative solutions for outreach, skills development and collaborative expertise in teaching across boundaries.
7. To embed cross border research through educational and training related collaborations with partner institutions in order to foster creativity, innovation and enterprise in relation to skills development.

Methodology

The project team carried out an investigation through the use of an online discussion forum with a series of meetings/seminars/surveys which culminated in a final seminar involving the participants and representatives from the Teaching Councils, North and South and the Department of Employment and Learning.

The participants in the forum discussions had a broad range of roles in WBL, outlined as follows:

Introduction: Profile and roles of WBL Reucators.

The online discussions commenced with a debate on the profiles and roles this broad sector

The responses were as follows:

I am a Staff Development practitioner and assisting with strategy

I am a College Principal - role in induction of new teachers, organisation of CPD, and in the development and maintenance of professional frameworks and support structures

I an a College Principal - role in induction of new teachers, organisation of CPD, and in the development and maintenance of professional frameworks and support structures

I am the co-ordinator of the Youthreach Centre In Blanchardstown Dublin. I manage the day to day operations of the centre. I developed a professional development programme ten years ago

I am a centre coordinator, I manage 9 teachers

I help to co-ordinate the course Post Graduate Diploma and Masters in Adult and Community Education.

I teach on this programme, and conduct research in the field

I am the Further Education Organiser in an FE college with responsibility for QA that incorporates staff support, induction & training

I work with industry in establishing what course modules and content should be provided by industry

I am a Programme Co-ordinator

Summary

The range of roles demonstrates the spread of WBL across community, business and academic domains and the recognition that initial training or continuing professional development is needed to ensure that relevant skillsets can be provided to enable staff to address the variety of educational needs.

Forum Discussion

The Forum discussions began with a debate on the purpose and value of WBL and the needs of the sector. An introductory commentary was posted and participants were asked to respond.

This commentary offers an overview of the purpose and value of work-based learning and the needs of the sector as an integral part of the current teacher education in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Hello everybody, my name is Gerry McAleavy and I work in the School of Education at University of Ulster. I am involved in FE teacher education at UU and have also worked with colleagues on research projects (see: http://www.ulster.ac.uk/lll/). My main concern or 'gripe' , to use the vernacular, is that the workbased learning sector has not, in the recent past, been accorded the value it merits and, consequently, teacher education in the sector has been undervalued. I hope this project will help to inform education professionals and policymakers regarding workbased learning and workbased teacher education. I think it is timely to raise this issue as North and South, the issue is now receiving due attention from policymakers who are now recognising that the traditional H.Dip or PGCE are not the only forms of teacher education. In this context I would hope that we can have a debate

concerning how we can share practice information across the geographical border, challenging the other less tangible borders in academia that serve to separate education professionals.

In Northern Ireland the formal education and training sector is supported by six area based regional Colleges. In the Republic of Ireland the formal sector operates through VECs who support community and vocational schools and a range of FE Colleges. This formal post primary sector is aligned closely to the needs of the county and managed locally by VECs. The informal sector North and South is diverse with a developing link to industry requirements and marginalised community needs. The range of providers in the ROI is dealt with through DES/FAS approved and other community funded initiatives and training providers. In the North of Ireland the provision is not dissimilar with many local and regional training organisations, operating alongside or in partnership with businesses, FHE Colleges and community and voluntary groups.

Discussion responses

Re: The Needs of the Work Based Learning Sector

anne murphy (DIT)

Dear SCOTENS colleagues
I composed a very lengthy response and it got lost somewhere in the technology!
So here is a very short one! My name is Anne Murphy and I work in the Dublin Institute of Technology.
I have a very mixed path to this project and topics discussed.
I 'trained' originally as a graduate in UCD's HDip Ed and worked as a 'proper' teacher with full contractual status, unlike my manual instructor colleagues. That is over 30 years ago now and we still seem to be struggling at the interface between codified-status knowledge and knowledge from the world outside that. I have worked in education and development roles all my life both in Ireland and internationally and am certain of less and less as I go along. I have come across extraordinarily gifted 'teachers' and 'mentors' outside education

as well as inside it. I am not sure at all how one becomes one of these: perhaps reflection mixed with intuition, genetics, opportunities, scars tissue, etc??? Granted we can learn skills and tricks of the trade either in simulated work situations or real ones. Or is it something about insights and constantly revisiting our worldviews/perspectives/understandings every time we experience something new?...and having possible responses located in every pocket and pore? I've watched very young people connect wonderfully with children when teaching them informally. No frameworks for reflection, or diaries or schemas there....just un-interfered-with human instincts and the ability to learn and explain it??? Let's not get too-totalitarian about how best to 'train teachers'...give them scope to be young and inexperienced....

Re: The Needs of the Work Based Learning Sector

My name is Ted Fleming and I am involved in 'training' adult educators at postgraduate level at the National University of Ireland Maynooth http://adulteducation.nuim.ie/. I am also Director of the Centre for Research in Adult Learning and Education. http://adulteducation.nuim.ie/research/ResearchActivities-current.shtml When I read Paper I find myself agreeing with the content but also wondering if the writer and I are saying the same thing! Of course experiential learning is important. So too are the tools of the developing teacher (diary, a tutor to support reflection and a professional dialogue). But what is happening in the reflection?. What kind of thoughts are being encouraged to make it a reflection on practice, and a reflective practice ?,

Let me give an example of what I am thinking. Many people working with adults like to form a circle of students as distinct from the rows of a traditional classroom. Most people would say that this is more democratic, it is easier to participate, people are more equal in their access to other, you can see everyone. It is not always as teacher centered because the teacher joins the circle.

However, in the kind of critical reflection in which I am interested there is a focus on the exercise of power in such a situation. I mean by this that the circle hides power and all

pretend that we are all equal. It disguises the clear power of the teacher (who can frequently pass or fail students). It is also a frightening place to be for some. There is no place to hide. No place to be quiet. There is a tyranny of the learning circle that is often hidden by the conventional adult push to form a learning circle.

My point is that reflection on practice is all very well. But what kind of thoughts are being encouraged? What do you think?

Re: The Needs of the Work Based Learning Sector

Hi Scotens Colleagues

My name is Angela Whiteside. For many years I taught young people and adults before becoming an inspector for FE and work based learning programmes. I am currently on secondment to the Department funding those programmes in a Quality Monitoring role. I am working also with Celia and Gerry on a project to upskill our workforce in both training and FE. From my experience both as a teacher and as an inspector (where I have had the privilege to observe some wonderful practitioners), I frequently think that good teachers are born and not made.

I agree with Anne that a lot is down to intuition, genetics etc. However, good teachers do tend to be reflective practitioners and to benefit from sharing ideas with others etc. They are very innovative and keen to engage in new activities. The problem is how do we make those who have difficulties more effective??? Many trainers in WBL situations learn from experience gained in the workplace but very often good practitioners who have not any pedagogical training are unsure of their own effectiveness.

I enjoyed reading your contributions and will try and increase my participation. Angela

Re: The Needs of the Work Based Learning Sector

Colleagues

Interesting comments being posted. Yes, the aspect of power and who decides it etc is highly important in how we conceptualise 'training' of work-related/FE tutors/trainers/lecturers. My experience over the past seven years working with HE lecturing staff on professional development programmes leads me to suspect that the quality assurance/value for money/effectiveness movement has the main voice in current agendas (neo-cons, techno-rationalists...however one wishes to describe them) and that current funding policies favour these agendas with almost no room for criticality, and indeed that the technologies for reflection frequently used as exemplars contribute to this. I am struck frequently by the ease with which the language of 'harmonisation' and 'coherence' is elided with the language of quality assurance, especially in the move towards EU-wide concepts and technical arrangements. Ted made the point of identifying the locus of power in a formal adult learning situation, with reference to circles etc.

Perhaps the power we need to think about now is not in the actual pedagogic context of engagement any more but on a more macro scale of meta policy driven by external powers! My experience is that academic staff are torn between the obligation to 'comply' with each new imposed pedagogic regulation and procedure, and their frequently different ideological position regarding their own roles in education generally. It is interesting that identity issues as well as professional practice issues are breaking out, even as huge amounts of research funding are allocated towards large scale 'harmonisation' projects in the name of quality control and efficiency, as well as 'return on investment'. These issues may be articulated differently north and south, and it is interesting to reflect on how there may be ideological differences underpinning differences in language and differences in how HE sees its role as a public good in both geographic regions.

Re: The Needs of the Work Based Learning Sector

▢*by **celiaoh** on Fri Oct 03, 2008 2:04 pm*

The question following this line of discussion may well be.... how do we encourage our tutors (workbased learning professional trainers or teachers in FE Colleges and beyond) to take a 'risk', to reflect (as Ted says) and to progress their ideas within a bureaucratic environment perhaps - teacher education programmes require partnership arrangements for this to work in my view.

What is teacher education partnership?

At Ulster we organise partnerships for curriculum, for support, for assessment but very importantly with human beings who are creative and passionate and will aid the person being trained or advanced on the programme of learning.

How might this work?

What are the ingredients?

Indeed, are we teaching them or are they teaching us?

All views.

Celia

Re: The Needs of the Work Based Learning Sector

by **Gerry**

Thanks Celia and others who have responded. The current discussion has identified the need for a reflective approach while asking questions concerning how quality mechanisms stimulate or obstruct the creativity of the teacher. It is to be noted that the new revised curriculum in NI schools has been based on a recognition that previous approaches were over-prescriptive and that the motivation of the teacher and the learner are the necessary prequisites for improving education and ensuring inclusion. In higher education the UK Quality Assurance Agency has recently been backing off somewhat from an approach to quality assurance which many consider was too focused on paper evidence and did not include very much in the way of observation or engagement with teachers.

Further education is in an in-between stage, being subject to QAA in relation to the higher

education elements and, also, being subject to various external forms of scrutiny from professional bodies, verification agencies, vocational organisations, employer bodies as well as ETI inspection.

There are, however, some promising developments. For example, the Improving Quality:Raising Standards (IQ:RS) system (in NI) requires self assessment by colleges and this offers opportunities for college staff to offer different perspectives on their achievements and to construct criteria for success that may have been overlooked by other forms of quality governance. This is one way in which a reflective and critical approach to learning outcomes can become embedded within quality systems, or at least this becomes a possibility.

What do others think and how does this relate to the ROI context?

Best Wishes
Gerry

Re: The Needs of the Work Based Learning Sector

Gerry mentioned the encouragement of self evaluation and reflection in a recent post. My more recent experience of FE staff is that there is still some way to go to attain a productive level of self evaluation in order to constructively inform practice.
Something for discussion ?
regards
Keith

Re: The Needs of the Work Based Learning Sector

What support structure do we need in place both within an educational environment and as part of a formal teacher/tutor education programme to support self evaluation or critical reflective practice?

Perhaps, following on from Keith's challenging comments, this is the key question?

It would be our view, as members of a teacher/tutor education team at the University of Ulste, that critical reflective practice is central to the skills-set of the new and experienced FE College tutor or workbased learning professional. The process of teacher education must allow for this - ensuring there are opportunities for peer-to-peer (collaborative learning) tutoring, mentoring, regular challenging feedback and constructive advice. A programme of teacher education for the post compulsory sector, in particular, calls for this in our view. Why? Typically because the professional lecturer/teacher/trainer/tutor working in a College/Community/Workplace Training field will be engaged in employed practice. This workbased experience is central to the learning and should include a 'looking in to' and 'looking out of' that experience in order to help the individual practitioner 'reflect in action' and 'reflect on action' (Schon).

A partnership is therefore required to support this!
1. With the employer/training or education provider for staff development and assessment purposes
2. With the individual - who needs to be mentored to appreciate the process
3. With the teacher education provider (University in NI) - to facilitate (coordinate) and map the process of learner development and competence (eventually) to required standards and provide the support to all concerned in the learning and reflective cycle.

Challenges -

What are the challenges to such a partnership?

What are the challenges to the employer?

What are the challenges to the individual?

What are the challenges to the teacher education provider?

Would you all like now to consider the challenges and other commentary to discuss

possible good practice or ideas for the future that we might share. All views please.

Celia

I agree with what you say and would only add that the value to a new trainer/tutor of having a mentor or critical friend is crucial. New staff are often appreciative of someone taking them under their wing and helping them with the planning of schemes and session plans etc. These are often clutched as a life line and should be given on the understanding that they are just that and that the new trainer should develop their own individual teaching style which suits their personality and the relationship which they nurture with their students.

It is often difficult to teach from someone else's notes or plans and during the mentoring time the 2 parties can reflect on how the new trainer can adapt or design their own material.

However having said that - we should not reinvent the wheel - that is a waste of time. If an experienced mentor has something which works very well and is durable (eg scheme of work), the new trainer could use it with confidence and evaluate its effectiveness on an ongoing basis.
<u>*sue.nelis*</u>

Re: The Needs of the Work Based Learning Sector

Colleagues
Interesting comments and contributions about reflection! Again, my mind goes towards criticality regarding the notion of reflection and why is may be a 'competence' or 'skill', and how criticality is related to 'evaluation' in the sense of measuring against performance criteria! I am always uneasy when relflection is in any way linked to 'compliance' with external notions and rewarded with approval in this way. There is a danger with schemas for reflection which lead towards 'correct' and 'approved' positionalities...in all aspects of education... There is always the danger of an agenda of social/political reproduction as is evident in many policy documents...with an air of economic/human capital...

Such positionalities are indeed legitimate in their own rights...The question - how does HE position itself wirh regard to its public remit and the public good when it comes to thinking about the 'individual' reflective practitioner?

anne murphy

Re: The Needs of the Work Based Learning Sector

Hi, Robbie Burns here. Sorry for the late entry, partly due to technical difficulties with my password, but also having formally retired I have not been available until now. Until 31 August I was Head of Learning Development in the Faculty of Business in the Dublin Institute of Technology, and earlier had a lot of contact with the professional development needs of business executives through the School of Management in DIT.
I won't distract by going back to responses to earlier questions but try to enter the conversation in response to Celia's latest questions.

Having said that however my experience of the needs of the employer side for work based learning does impinge on our understanding of work based learning. (Ted did ask earlier were we talking about the same thing? Perhaps there is a continuum of work based learning that we need to define more clearly.)

The model we often have for learning is the teacher centred one and I think some of that transfers to our thinking about the needs of the mentor/facilitator in WBL where we have been wrestling with how best to support new teachers in their role as mentors. (I realise there are a lot of teachers in this role).

At the other end of the continuum of learning, where the student-centred model applies, the challenges are quite different. Because the academy is sometimes not seen as being at the most cutting edge in learning (especially in the application of technology in the fast changing world of business) employers sense the need to apply work based learning concepts to develop some of our best graduates from the academy to enable them to

effectively develop the business goals. That demands mentors who are actively engaged in the workplace of real business life. So a challenge that I see is to develop the model of learning in partnership with the employers so that the quality standards of the academy are maintained, mentors from both the academy and the employer side reflect together on how best to supply the mentoring to benefit the student, and that we can also learn from the student who is at the centre of the learning.
rburns

Re: The Needs of the Work Based Learning Sector

Hi everyone I'm Walter Bleakley and I'm part of the UUJ team. Sorry for the very late entry into this discussion; I have considered offering as an excuse that I was waiting to review the content of the posting and then make my contribution illuminated by the profound thoughts of others but I know that wouldn't be believed!
Anyway, I have found the postings thus far challenging and insightful. The practice of critical reflective practice can be a lonely process and as such can encourage the conclusion that you are the only aspirant teacher who is experiencing difficulty! This has been the experience of my current postgraduate students who are pre service F/T placement students working in schools alongside experienced teachers.

The spectre of pass/fail is always around and causes a reluctance to reveal classroom issues that might be construed as inefficient or worse professionally inappropriate! This is understandable if you accept that beginning teachers might not have the confidence to be able to justify their practices to an assessor or outside observer. This syndrome of professional insecurity is felt strongest in students who are placed by themselves in schools and where mentor support while present is not adjacent when needed. Students in post placement reviews and evaluations have recorded this feeling of professional insecurity.

In recent years Web CT has been utilized to encourage a "virtual placement community" the aim of which was to dismantle the sense of isolation by encouraging placement

students to post teaching issues experienced on placement. Students who utilized the facility were very quick to point out how professional heartening it was to hear that their peers were encountering problems that were similar to theirs. This was quickly followed by exchange of strategies, resources and pedagogy. This interchange was honest and open to an extent that might not have been the case in the more "power" induced tutor/mentor/student interphase that often characterises teaching and assessment.
<u>walter</u>

Re: The Needs of the Work Based Learning Sector

Thank you all so far.

I think we are very clear that the 'partnership' model of workbased learning (learning in the workplace or learning from experience) is crucial. Sue has told us of her experience as a mentor. Ted and Robbie have outlined the various needs when working with different types of partnerships for WBL. Clearly there is a crucial finding to highlight here - that all must work together, that the right people must be involved (knowing what makes for good practice, being current in your practice) and that we must not be too 'rigid' when facilitating learning from experience (helping people to create those schemas Anne talks of).

Walter tells us of the risk he has found from student teacher models of WBL. Entwistle talked many years ago about the idea of the student teacher feeling the need to sound 'like a teacher'..... without this professional confidence and support to grow many (if we are honest) stay in this rut of wanting to 'sound like a teacher'. It is the vital role then of the partnership that all involved are suitably guided and supported. What might a partnership look like from your experience?

All views welcomed. Thank you for your views so far.

Celia

The Design and Planning of WBL Teacher Education in Relation to Identified Needs

Summary of Recommendations made by WBL teacher Educators

- More classroom observation - formally and peer to peer

- Looking at comparative, global examples

-

  Tutors need to be involved in the course design

- Recognition of the difference between adult learners and second level students

- Developing further innovative, creative curriculum projects

- The manager/principal/co-ordinator needs to support the tutors to ensure a transfer of learning and change of practice occurs

- More emphasis on experiential learning of trainers/adult educators and adult learners

- More cross border activity and teacher exchanges would greatly enhance the experience. This to be done asap.

- In this current financial climate it will be difficult to provide free courses for tutors. However in my experience there are many ways of sharing best practice which can be very cost effective. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience within the sector. In my organisation we have developed a community of practice meetings were all Staff from Youthreach centres and Traveller Training centres meet to share best practice develop standards and participate in training.

- I would like immediate recognition of the Post Graduate Diploma

- I would like to see in-service education for all adult educators, every 5 years

- i would like to see more policy from the DES and the Adult Education agencies to apply to the field, immediately.

- Built in as both formal and informal activity - usually managed by peers.

- Skills audits conducted yearly

- Joint recognition of the course by DES and Teaching Council

- We have ELT teams the format of which is based on reflective practice. Mediation is used as a tool to resolve conflicts within the centre. This encourages the tutors to reflect on the issues.

Summary

.As the discussions indicate, a priority issue was the recognition of the validity of WBL teacher education in light of the relative lack of understanding of the needs of the sector. The introductory session raised the issue of how WBL teacher education and, indeed work based learning was valued. As the discussion developed, the issues raised, North and South were similar, namely the need for a model that valued reflection and was not prescriptive. There was a concern that harmonization could, all too easily become a synonym for a technocratic approach to teacher education that ignored the need for the development of critical faculties; equally there is a call for the teacher educators to reflect on their practice and note how they were sharing, or failing to share, power. .The need for creativity and passion was articulated. Equally there was a concern that the meta policies

and practices could be adversely affected by macro policies that were primarily driven by instrumental concerns.

Information and Learning Technologies (ILT)

This online discussion was focused on the role of Information Learning Technologies (ILT) in relation to WBL teacher initial education and subsequent CPD.

ILT in Education and Training

hmccarry

You may proceed to the online forum discussion area to contribute to the professional dialogue. All views are greatly appreciated.

🗋 *Violet*

Welcome everybody to the online ILT discussion. ILT stands for Information Learning Technology.

The most recent curriculum theme to be reviewed in Further and Higher Education in Northern Ireland is the use of ILT within the classroom. Technology enhanced learning as a strategy of our college sector of post compulsory educators encourages teachers working with both young and adult learners to become more creative practitioners in the future.

Following paper 1 where we investigated the needs of the teachers and work-based learning providers within this sector, it is vital to note the very important learning delivery skill of 'differentiation'. I would suggest, from my experience, teachers like many are charged with a wide range of learner needs and therefore must develop in three particular area, viz:

1. The teacher's ability to promote the use of technology
2. The teacher's skill in using the new technology
3. The teacher's competence to integrate and embed technology into their curriculum plans

Promoting the use of technology
It is an essential skill for our workforce therefore it is all teachers' responsibilities to encourage and promote the use of technology within their classroom environment.

Using the new Technology
Teachers increasingly require staff development and support in the use of technology enhanced learning.
Employers need to plan effectively in order to support teaching staff.

Competence to integrate and embed technology into the Curriculum Plans
Learning delivery standards require us to ensure teaching methods support all learner styles. Increasingly learners are developing new ways to and modalities to support how they communicate. It is not unusual to find learners within the post-compulsory sector using mobile technologies, internet solutions and synchronous and asynchronous forms of instant and distant dialoguing.

Teachers are often challenged to consider such hi-tech solutions when the reality is learners themselves are not!

It is worth noting for discussion that teachers can often, when sufficiently trained and confident to reflect and self-challenge, develop user friendly accessible methods of teaching with suitable technology. We all know that there is no such thing as the perfect lecture/lesson. Taking a risk with creative teaching methods including the use of technology is the only way forward if we are to become 'homelanders' as opposde to 'aliens' within our own classroom.

I would welcome sharing good practice in this area and invite discussion in relation to 1-3 above. Do you agree, disagree or otherwise?

Violet

Re: ILT in Education and Training

These 3 pointers offered in the stimulus paper:
1. The teacher's ability to promote the use of technology
2. The teacher's skill in using the new technology
3. The teacher's competence to integrate and embed technology into their curriculum plans
All three are hierarchal and interdependent with (1.) being predetermined by 2 & 3. Colleges and Universities have to be pro-active in offering CPD courses to staff in the area of ILT at times that staff can access them and vitally staff have to be afforded the flexibility to attend and become knowledgeable and skilled in of new and developing technologies.

Now most College authorities would be able to state that they already make this provision and staff are encouraged to make use of the courses provided. However what these courses can't do is to explore the Main subject realities and differences in the use and application of ICT. Course programmes of this type tend to be generic because of discipline diversity of staff who attend.

Given the inevitability of this it makes good sense to explore how new technologies can be tailored to the needs of the learners in different disciplines and how staff working with these students can be empowered to make best use of developing technologies. One strategy that has been deployed in the PGCE Pre-service staff team at the University of Ulster has been for selected individuals to attend CPD courses and then to offer work-shops for their

colleagues.
Some examples being WebCT support for students on school placements and e-portfolios as a vehicle for mapping and recording student competency development.

These peer lead sessions have proved invaluable for diffusing the new technologies into a course team. Moreover they engender a positive sense of professional interdependence and professional sharing that generates benefits way beyond the initial purpose.
Walter

Re: ILT in Education and Training

hmccarry

I am of the opinion that teacher education within the F & HE context must address not just the skill set of new teachers but also fulfil focused mentoring to ensure quality transfer of those skills to enhance learning in the workplace. Teacher educators cannot just introduce the skills but have a responsibility, in conjunction with workplace mentors/line managers, to ensure that teachers employ technology in innovative and creative ways. We must avoid the death by powerpoint scenario; the use of email as a mere communication tool only; or indeed using a virtual learning environment as just a repository for text/handouts.

There has to be a clear distinction in teacher training programmes between someone using technology and a teacher enhancing learning through technology. Teachers must practice their art accordingly.

In other words appropriate use of technology cannot be expected to occur like trickle down economics - reflective opportunities must be designed and monitored to assist teachers. It must be embedded as a key learning methodology and not a bolt on resource.

To paraphrase GB Shaw - the biggest illusion in teacher training is that is has been accomplished.
hmccarry

Re: ILT in Education and Training

When we reflect on our teaching sessions we often find that it is the unplanned things which bring the desired results. This could come about by intuitive interaction with our students or more insightful learning on the part of the teacher who responds to the students in a way which is natural and instinctive. This could be interpreted as being what Angela mentioned in the previous topic as the 'good teachers are born' syndrom. Can this be enhanced with the inclusion of ILT as a teaching resource? We know that the more senses that are used similtaneously, the more the learner will have the message reinforced and

learning occur. Teachers can therefore use ILT to support their message and increase the stimulus.

The difficulty is that often teachers do not have the ILT skills to activate the learning and I constantly hear them say "but I don't know how to do that" or "where will I get the time to learn all that". While these comments are perfectly acceptable and expressed honestly a response which I often give is what Gary Player, the golfer, says "the more I practise, the luckier I get". If we learn one little thing every day or two we can 'accumulate the minimum gain' and move on - I got that last quote from the very successful cycling team who train in Manchester with the help of the lottery fund and use it as their motto.

sue.nelis

Re: ILT in Education and Training

by walter

Yes I can agree with all the posting thus far. I am constantly reminded of how teachers can feel deskilled by the new developing technologies. I have had comments from teachers such as:
"I feel that I could begin to use the interactive white board if I could take it home and play with it!!! I just haven't the time to explore it's application in my subject because of the everyday demands of my work." Or the comment:
"I'm confident enough it terms of use and application but I'm terrified that it will break down or I won't be able to log on and the students will be looking at me in expectation. Plan B in such scenarios is just viewed as additional work on top of a very busy daily schedule.

Have others been in this position?
walter

Re: ILT in Education and Training

Walter you capture well the human aspect of this issue. One can wax lyrically about the desire to develop the skills of teachers etc but the recognition that the reality of actual use, with all its trial and tribulation for teachers must be acknowledged. I have often been psyched up to deliver a bells and whistle technology enhaced session, only to be defeated by the hardware or a hitch in the network. One's ego is affected as the audience look at you and all manner of judgments - perceived or real - go through one's mind.

I have learned to be realistic as a result and not permit the technology to be the tail that wags the dog. The focus must be the learning with realistic use of the technology planned. Indeed one could argue that the use of the technology should be Plan "B" if there is any

doubt about its reliability ie if all goes well implement the technology.

I believe teachers should be facilitated to engage with the use of technology in partnership with an informed peer, using shared experience to build up confidence.
hmccarry

Re: ILT in Education and Training

□ *walter*

Hi Harry,
Yes I see the point clearly and would support the view of technology being use to enhance and expand the learning opportunity for the learners.
walter

Re: ILT in Education and Training

rburns

I could sympathise with Harry and Walter regarding being at the mercy of technology. Having just retired I haven't had the access at work I am used to and my involvement in the forum hasn't been helped by the sudden death of my home broadband! Three weeks to get it resurrected by our provider!! Apologies to the 'teacher' for being absent!

During my absence from this online forum I was reading some papers I had downloaded just prior to my broadband's demise. A very helpful paper by Diana Laurillard in the electronic journal 'Studies in Higher Education' tries to give some pedagogic substance when using technology. I recommend reading 'The teacher as action researcher: using technology to capture pedagogic form' in Issue 33:2,139 — 154.

On a separate note I carried out some research in the past few years concerned with staff support for the development of online delivery of learning. One key theme arising from that was how little senior academic managers seem to appreciate
a. The need for careful planning into staff timetables the 'space' teachers need to be able to develop online modules of learning. Managers are the 'power' source in this need.
b. How little senior academic managers actually exploit the 'affordances' of the technology themselves to learn more about how they might support academic teaching staff. They sign off expensive contracts for hardware and software but there seems to be little real accountability for review of the effectiveness of such decisions.
c. The key role of various types of 'networks' (international, institutional, and one to one) in the development of academic teaching staff.
rburns

Re: ILT in Education and Training

by llavery

hello all

I have read all your postings with interest - as someone who delivered on an HND/HNC programme, it was interesting how I often took on an ILT mentoring role with some of students in terms of the technology whilst I often learned from other students and developed ILT skills from them. We cannot always assume that our learners are all skilled "digital generation" users and many will need assistance from lecturers. An induction for learners is therefore necessary in terms of adapting them into the world of e-learning and this needs to be continuously reinforced throughout the duration of programmes we deliver.

Here at BMC, we are also driving employee development ILT activities in a focused team and curriculum way, with staff encouraged to bring curriculum resources along to training sessions so that they can immediately adapt and use resources created through the training activity.

Using the technology to facilitate accessibility is another key aspect - staff are encouraged to see the advantages of tools within the technology to aid learners and meet SENDO and other compliance areas.

best wishes

Lorraine

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Summary

 The postings emphasise the need to embed and integrate ILT into the curriculum and teaching practice rather than becoming diverted by the technology itself. There was concern that the use of ILT should not disadvantage learners, particularly where the learners had special needs and respondents pointed to the need to be compliant with standards and government regulation. There was a warning that, in some cases, the students may be 'digital natives' while the tutors are 'digital aliens'.
This online discussion was focused on the role of Information Learning Technologies (ILT) in relation to WBL teacher initial education and subsequent CPD.   Initially the project Team set up a website to offer WBL teacher education providers the opportunity to commence discussion on the nature and role of teacher education for the WBL sector. This was the

first occasion when providers had experienced an opportunity to communicate with one another on the key issues facing the sector. As the discussions indicate, a priority issue was the recognition of the validity of WBL teacher education in light of the relative lack of understanding of the needs of the sector. The introductory session raised the issue of how WBL teacher education and, indeed work based learning was valued. As the discussion developed, the issues raised, North and South were similar, namely the need for a model that valued reflection and was not prescriptive. There was a concern that harmonization could, all too easily become a synonym for a technocratic approach to teacher education that ignored the need for the development of critical faculties; equally there a call for the teacher educators to reflect on their practice and note how they were sharing, or failing to share, power. .The need for creativity and passion was articulated. Equally there was a concern that the meta policies and practices could be adversely affected by macro policies that were primarily driven by instrumental concerns.

Content of teacher education

There was a common core content visible in the responses from WBL teacher educators in relation to the content of programmes:

- Learning Theories

-

- Behaviour Management

-

- Lesson Planning

-

- Schemes of Work

-

- Reflective Practice

-

- Teaching Methodologies

-
- Professional Values/Practice

-
- ILT/ICT/eLearning

-
- Special Educational Needs

-
- Literacy in the Classroom

-
- Teaching and the Law

-
- Counselling Skills

Work based learning [wbl] as a method of teacher education

This discussion moved on to discuss the relevance of teacher education for the sector.

Most formal teacher education and training is provided by a university, or a College of a university, offering recognised training in support of general teaching practice. By formal the authors are referring to that provision which is accredited and recognised by the Departments of Education in the North or South of Ireland and, or where appropriate, the Teaching Council responsible for the sector. The role of the workplace, whether an institute, college, training organisation or community or adult educational provider, is to support a developing teacher or tutor by offering mentorship and leadership.

What is the agreed view of North and South practitioners regarding the definition of Work Based Learning and the skills required in the sector?

Work based learning (WBL) is generally accepted to mean 'learning in the workplace'. The value of the work situation in offering resources and situational challenges to a new or developing teacher or tutor is central to the personal journey involved in work based learning.

How does WBL support the developing tutor or teacher?

Experience is known to be central to the growth of the profession, whereby the individual has the opportunity, time and support to revisit/reflect, analyse and understand (interpretive learning) the process of good practice and the needs of learners they are responsible for.

Central to the experiential learning (where a person is supported in this time of reflection) are the tools of the developing teacher or tutor. The tools to help us reflect include: a method of recording (some use a diary), a tutor to support their constructive review (some use mentors/coaches) and a professional dialogue to enhance the experience.

What are the needs of the teacher/tutor early in their career in the classroom/training room/in supporting learners?

Typically it has been found that the new tutor/teacher will require certain skills to support their practice. An awareness of good practice is not easy to pick up from a book nor is it attainable without experimentation and support.

Planning is central to the teaching experience of the new teacher/tutor as is the overall structure of curriculum/lessons and documentary teaching guides. Often in the post compulsory sector a tutor will have to design these documents themselves.

Direct teaching can be very exciting but also daunting to the new tutor particularly when faced with the diversity of learner needs that are common to the post compulsory education and training sector. Management traits can support such challenges, including an ability to use methods of teaching to support different types of learners with different and often challenging needs.

An ability to stimulate, maintain attention, manage behaviour and be creative, is a tall order for a tutor who has a curriculum/programme to follow, a new group of learners and many different styles and needs in the room.

Good communication skills are essential. The tutor/teacher must show confidence in their presentation of information, the manner in which they approach and disseminate messages and the way they challenge learners to learn.

CONCLUSIONS

The discussions culminated in a conference held in Ballymascallon Hotel on December 15 2008. There were presentations from Belfast Metropolitan College, Dublin Institute of Technology, University of Ulster, Cavan Institute and jointly from Department of Employment and Learning and Lifelong Learning Northern Ireland.

The presentation from DIT pointed to the complex issue of identity as WBL educators have a range of roles (community, workforce development, civic remit) and work in a fuzzy environment where there are both shared and conflicting values. There was a view expressed that there was a need for less standardisation and micro-control and that tutors required spaces to explore different forms of knowledge. It was noted that there were policy issues to be addressed including the risk that 'exclusive' areas of 'training' and 'education' might be created with limited transfer across these sectors and the demarcation of roles was a task that needed to be undertaken. Given that training was carried out both in the private and public sectors there likely to be tensions in terms of the definition of the

level of service. 'Heavy' government policy initiatives could lead to over-regulation and central control.

From Cavan Institute the focus was on the development of creative teaching, greater motivation of staff and the power of partnership in constructing fruitful HE-FE relationships. In relation to the course currently being offered,Cavan noted the importance of the close integration of theory and practice linked to workforce development needs.

The University of Ulster presentation emphasized the importance of having the right infrastructure to enable HE to respond to college needs and the need to have the right staff to deliver the programmes. In this context it was noted that better mutual understanding between the HE and FE sectors must include college input into course design. Equally HE assessment should dovetail with college staff development portfolio requirements. Agreement on objectives and measures of success should be allied with the understanding that purely theoretical input was inadequate and workforce development had to be essential aspect of programme design. Regular communication from the HE provider to the college is essential and should include progress reports, updates on performance and facilitative feedback. The course design should, also, take note of the implications for the college context on the completion of the course and in-college mentoring and further development of learning, innovation and enterprise skills should be considered.

DEL/LLUKNI observed that course had to be effective in terms of responding to local and regional circumstances and priorities in meeting the needs of all learners. Three broad headings for consideration were presented, namely: Leadership and management, Achievements and Outcomes and Quality of Provision for Learning. Key questions that need to posed in relation to programmes were, the effectiveness of teaching, training , learning and assessment, how well the learning experiences meet the needs of the learners and the wider community and how well the learners are cared for, guided and supported. There was a call for indicators that focus more appropriately on, social cohesion and economic development, care, guidance and support, diversity and careers information and guidance. The LLUK domains and professional standards relating to

learning and teaching, planning and learning, assessment for learning and access and progression were presented for consideration. The Northern Ireland quality system, 'Improving Quality: Raising Standards (IQ:Rs) was highlighted as an example of a relevant quality system. These ideas cannot be easily summarized but there are some central themes that have emerged:

- Learning in the workplace is vital to the process of teacher/tutor education and development.

- A skills-based teacher education and training programme should include key teaching skills development in areas as outlined above.

- Providers of teacher/tutor education must work in real partnership with the workplace to support the new and developing staff.

- A quality system is required that is flexible and responsive to the diverse needs of the WBL sectors.

- Workforce development has to be central to curriculum design but this approach has to take note of the need for innovation and creativity necessary to enable learners to cope with the rapid pace of social, economic and technological change.

- Partnerships are central to the process of teacher/tutor education and training – bringing work-based learning and formal accredited teacher education provision together in support of a common goal – improved practice/professional development.

- Roles and responsibilities must be clarified in order to ensure standards in teacher education partnerships.

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