**Update on ESCalate project: L2L in ITT**

**30/01/07**

**Project overview (including time-frame and costings of project)**

See appendix 1

**Project title**

Learning to learn in teacher education: the role of epistemology, conceptions of learning, pedagogies and dialogue

**Staff development sessions designed and delivered as part of the project**

* University of Chester, 15/12/04, 9-3:30 *‘Teaching for Learning Power’* (Pre tasks: reading and questionnaire)
* Liverpool Hope University, PGCE Primary Away day, June 05, 9-12:00 *Discussion on the notion of an* ***informed*** *personal philosophy of teaching, mindful of current research and theory in respect of learning-to-learn (L2L) and its possible application and use in ITT.*
* The College of St Mark & St John, 7/4/06, 9-3:30 *Teaching for Learning* (Pre tasks: reading and questionnaire)
* FoE @ EH\*, Primary & Early Years Team Staff Development, 18 May 2006 1-4 *Teaching, Learning and Assessment towards revalidation “Learning to Learn”*
* FoE @ EH, KS2/KS3 Team Staff Development, date?, 1-3:00, *Focus on identifying and developing an informed personal/team philosophy of teaching, mindful of current research and theory in respect of learning-to-learn (L2L) and its possible application and use in ITT*

\*Important to note that prior to the L2L staff development, Edge Hill’s Faculty of Education have spent significant time critically exploring its pedagogic practice

**Key persons supporting the project**

**Professor Guy Claxton** – At a meeting with Guy between Project Leader and tutors at Marjon (May 06) the notions of ‘will’ and ‘imagination’, ‘rock thinking’ v ‘water thinking’ and ‘smart ways of trapping people’ were posited as important to consider when engaging with such a project. Questions were raised concerning the barriers/challenges that we (project team/individuals) face when exploring and promoting the use and application of L2L thinking within ITT. The following challenges were specifically noted:

* Colleagues’ attitudes and beliefs (ie people who want to teach do not always want to learn)
* The attitudes to and beliefs about learning (and their understanding of what knowledge is) that trainees arrive with (see Jenny Moon’s discussion paper: *We seek it here…a new perspective on the elusive activity of critical thinking: a theoretical and practical approach* and Joanne Brownlee’s paper: *Epistemological Beliefs in Pre-Service Teacher Education Students*)
* Potentially the project has multiple layers to explore: tutors; trainees; children; and mentors
* Macro context - ITT can veer towards being content driven (pressure of time and amount to cover) with much of the assessment and adherence to Standards negating the promotion of L2L pedagogic practice

Claxton argued that we need to identify the ‘soft spots’ and then begin to broaden and explore them. **He confirmed the worth of individuals carrying out action research into their own practice, the accumulative effect being potentially interesting to disseminate.** He also suggested that the project would demand consideration being given to the language of learning in ITT as it is likely that this does inform current pedagogic practice and is likely to impact on any developments towards L2L. **As a way forward, Guy suggested that tutors might get into students (as learners) via a project on something that they have had to learn – a context where they naturally see themselves as learners. Such activity raises awareness of and discussion on the purpose of education.**

**Dr Peter Khan** – As a ‘critical friend’ Peter supported the initial face-to-face meeting (3 Nov 06 - see appendix 2 ‘letter of invite’) of those individuals who had drafted out initial ideas for action research into L2L in ITT. Peter explained how the importance of dialogue has been seen as central factor in enabling reflection on learning, but also through social constructivist theories in enabling learning itself. This was seen as a central feature in a recent review of the use of reflective practices in programmes of initial professional development for new members of academic staff (Khan *et al*, 2006), a review which also covered a significant number of papers directly relevant to ITT. With a view to helping the project team (as learners) model the kinds of behaviours that are central to the ESCalate project itself, Peter constructed an activity, comprising a series of prompts drawing on the framework developed within the review, but adapted for the purpose of establishing dialogue within the context of those involved with the ESCalate project (see appendix 3 activity: *Establishing dialogue within action research on learning to learn*). **Particular attention was paid to how we (project team) will give shape to a dialogue centred around our practice on learning to learn, and to how we might establish dialogue in further dimensions.**

As part of his support role, Peter shared some handouts on ‘networking’ and ‘making a development happen’. Peter explained how one’s ability to introduce new initiatives depends in significant part on the strength of one’s networks. **\*The challenge, therefore, Peter argued, is to establish further contacts around specific needs related to the development work amongst the project team, thus extending our network - hence, the noting of all those involved with the L2L staff development from the outset and the identification of individuals researching into this area in other institutions (see appendix 4).** Attention was also paid to the importance of persevering with a development, and to be mindful of how our belief in our capacity to make a difference influences the success or not of a proposed development.

***\*As project leader I propose to widen the network of people involved within the project by, for example, requesting to speak to all those individuals who have shown interest in the project, but, for whatever reason, have been unable to take forward their interest into an action research proposal/project. On speaking with this broader group I intend to capture any informal testing out of L2L ideas and, through such dialogue, promote further interest and thinking around the project focus.***

**Peter also took part in the peer review of 4 draft action research proposals**. From the outset it was agreed that careful consideration be given to how the proposed lines of enquiry fit with L2L and the general concerns and philosophy of the project itself. A number of overarching themes emerged from the peer review exercise:

* Reflection on trainees’ selves as learners and their teaching behaviours in classroom
* The use of technology (and, as such, the structuring of teaching sessions and/or blending of face-to-face with VLEs) to promote L2L
* Trainees’ understanding of what knowledge is on arrival into ITT
* The importance of dialogue

**Updated action research projects can be viewed as part of the Symposium proposal for BERA 2007 (see appendix 5).**

**Dr Jenny Moon** will be helping the project team during the second face-to-face day (Feb 9 07) to consider new perspectives on the elusive activity of critical thinking (of which reflection is part), giving both a theoretical and practical approach. Consideration will be given, too, to the use of ‘reflective journals’ and/or to discuss how reflection can be viewed as an integral component of good learning (not only for trainees, but also for the project team).

**Data gathered so far**

* Responses to teaching & learning audit/questionnaire & notes on ensuing discussion (University of Chester, Marjon)
* Edge Hill University – Graham Roger’s audit & report on pedagogic practice/perceptions within the FoE (2004?)
* ESCalate ‘interim’ evaluation (as part of initial project outline)
* Write-up of face-to-face meetings
* E-mail correspondence (giving insight into tutor engagement/dis-engagement)

On the basis of work to date, participants have submitted a Symposium proposal for BERA 2007. If unsuccessful with the BERA submission, the project team intend to submit an abstract to the ESCalate’s conference on Teacher Education and/or to Edge Hill’s sixth annual Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLTR) conference (http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/cltr/Events/Conference.htm).

**Project Outcomes/Dissemination**

In terms of the **overarching ESCalate project** I envisage the following **project outcomes:**

1. Publication/presentations on overall project - *Learning to learn in teacher education: the role of epistemology, conceptions of learning, pedagogies and dialogue*
2. Publication/presentations on individual action research projects
3. Publication/presentations on Project Leader’s interest in notion of ‘tutor learning’ - *Tutors as learners, the role of epistemology, models of professional development and dialogue*
4. Creation of a L2L in ITT network – by trying to establish a group across four institutions (or more) who are wishing to engage with this research. (Letter to be sent to all those in receipt of L2L staff development and have shown interest to capture informal testing out of L2L ideas. Dialogue used to promote further interest and thinking around the use and application of L2L in ITT)

**Appendix 1**

**ESCalate project**

**September 2006 – July 2007**

**A Critical Exploration of a Learning to Learn Perspective and its Pedagogical Impact on Teaching in ITT**

**Aim of the project**

The aim of the project is to critically explore how the notion of ‘learning-to-learn’ - a family of learning practices that enhances one’s capacity to learn, can be evoked in Initial Teacher Training.

**Objectives of the project**

1. To identify current pedagogic thinking and practice within ITT
2. To introduce ITT tutors to what learning looks like in the context of lifelong learning and to move towards establishing a shared L2L vision for the type of learning environment and the type of learners we wish to promote within a 21st century ITT curriculum
3. To identify any gaps and/or tensions between this vision (see above) and what is currently happening within ITT
4. To identify ‘champions’ or ‘improvement team’ to test out L2L ideas within their own practice and disseminate findings/evaluations
5. To draw on experts in the field of learning about learning, lifelong learning and learning power (and partnership schools familiar with models of L2L and the notion of lifelong learning) to support the Project Leader with the presentation of ideas and practice at a L2L in ITT type conference
6. To develop (interactive) artifact(s) for use with trainees, tutors & school-based mentors

**Rationale**

L2L in preparation for a lifetime of change is increasingly being posited as a main function of education. More specifically, learning in the 21st Century is demanding a shift in educational outcomes from what’s worth ‘knowing’ to what’s worth ‘being’. This cultural shift demands a particular view of intelligence to do with *knowing what to do when you don’t know what to do* (Piaget) ie ‘problem solving’. Closely allied to the promotion of a L2L curriculum is an understanding and valuing of research, and to an extent the development of skills of doing research, as being central to what *all* students should experience in higher education. The learning to learn (L2L) rhetoric and its association with ‘inquiry-based’ or ‘research-informed’ teaching has implications for the way we go about planning, assessing, evaluating and tracking for learning. Engagement with the project will bring together our passion as teachers about devising better ways in which our trainees might become more effective learners and the rapid advances that are being made in how learning is understood.

**Project journey will cover three core components:**

**What?** (Content and context) – the research focus and associated theoretical perspectives

**So what?** (The alignment of theory and practice) - consideration of their (focus & theory) significance for the individual tutors’ unique circumstances

**Now what?** (Reflection on (practice) ideas and theory and projection to the future) – analysis of implications of the content, processes and approaches to teaching for learning and projection into future practice.

**Stages of journey**

1. Collecting and sharing Tutor voices of (pedagogic) experience – ‘what we think works’

2. Reflections on T for L theory and research into/on practice via selected L2L readings and introduction to Claxton’s notion of Building Learning Power (BLP) as a L2L strategy.

3. Elaboration of (L2L pedagogic) principles in terms of own context and reflections on the journey so far, to include components that are:

* derived/created
* adopted
* adapted
* developed
* rejected

4. Towards an ideal pedagogic position posited – collating response to the journey re: ‘kind of learners’ & ‘kind of learning environment’

5. Small scale action-research based projects proposed

6. Artefact(s) created comprising principles & the ‘how to’ and exemplification

7. Using the artefact(s) to extend repertoire:

‘for sharing with students’

‘for cpd in schools’

‘for management’ – towards practical application/programme design

‘for leadership’ – vision statements re pedagogy and ITT/TCPD

8. Outcomes:

Process written up for dissemination, prefaced in literature & artefact(s), and informed by critical evaluation from Guy Claxton (international scholar), Mark Schofield (H of TLD), Linda Rush & Laura Osborne (Project Leaders) and participants themselves (ITT tutors (across 4 HEIs) & students).

**Benefits:**

* Use of existing ESCalate money to promote professional development - to experiment and to ask questions about the use of BLP (and related L2L thinking) as a useful vehicle to add value to the pedagogic repertoire in ITT
* Opportunity to work with an international scholar and across ITT institutions (eg The College of St Mark & St John, Liverpool Hope University, University of Chester)
* The promotion of allegiances and a synergy between individuals within the Faculty/School and across institutions
* The capturing of an artefact articulating a L2L pedagogic position
* Articulation of a distinctive, declared pedagogic position for Edge Hill.
* RDAP output

**Timescale and Action:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Action/Journey Step | Timescale | Costs |
| Identification of ‘champions’  Note: Whilst 20 ‘champions’ were initially identified across three HEIs, only 4 have taken forward their interest into action research projects. With a view to extending the ‘network’ of interest/activity interviews are being carried out with the remaining 16 tutors. | By July 2006 (Note: Steps 1 – 4 have been completed via a series of staff development days) | Project Leader to interview and analyse/interpret data – no cost. |
| Away-day for self-selected ‘champions’ or ‘improvement team’ (across all four institutions) - this day would cement cross-institutional relationships between likeminded team members eg managers, subject/phase specialists, aspects of L2L/BLP to be focused on etc. Most importantly, to assist tutors with their critical reflections on their proposed L2L/BLP ‘experiments’, time could be spent during this day inducting tutors into the concept of ‘reflection’ and a range of reflective models that could be drawn on to capture on-going reflection (ie raw data). | November 3 2006 | * Payment for external speaker (Dr Peter Khan) to assist ‘champions’ with their approach to action research design & use of dialogue. * Travel and overnight stay to proposed venue (‘champions) |
| Periodic meetings (intra-collegiate & inter-collegiate) - to allow for the peer review of practice during the course of the year. | October 2006 – May 2007 (small-scale partnerships)  February 9 2007 – Away-day for all project team members (supported by external presentations) | * Payment for external presenter (dr Jenny Moon) * Travel to proposed venue |
| Write-up of individual projects. | February 2006 – May 2007 |  |
| L2L in ITT symposium | May 2007 – Edge Hill University  September 2007 – BERA |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Project Costings To Date | **£** |
| Project Leader Travel Costs (April, May 2006) | 215.90 |
| External Consultancy and Expenses (November 2006) | 474.20 |
| Participant’s Travel and Accommodation (November 2006) | 570.55 |
| Participant’s Subsistence (November 2006) | 95.75 |
| TOTAL | **1356.40** |

**Appendix 2**

Dear All

I’d like to take this opportunity of thanking you all for agreeing to be engaged with the proposed cross-institutional ESCalate project: A critical exploration of a L2L perspective and its pedagogical impact on teaching in ITT (see attached).

On reading the script for the project journey I am conscious of a number of challenges that will require some thinking about if the project aim and objectives are to meet with success. These are as follows:

1. **Time-frame:** From the outset, we need to be mindful of the time frame that the project sits within: **September 06 to June 07**. ESCalate have been very explicit about the need for some sort of dissemination of ideas to occur by June 2007. Some kind of symposium style of event, perhaps, as part of Edge Hill’s Centre for Learning, Teaching & Research (CLTR) annual conference is being proposed as an initial medium for dissemination (**May 07**).

2. **Face-to-face (F2F) meetings:** A number of strategic F2F cross-institutional meetings between Edge Hill University, The College of St Mark and St John, and the University of Chester are being proposed (**Friday 3 November 06, Friday 9 February 07**) (possibly at the ESCalate centre in Bristol) as a way of developing: (a) a mutually agreed understanding of what the project is about; (b) sharing and peer reviewing one another’s proposed line of enquiries; and (c) being supported with the design and implementation of a small-scale L2L action research project, central to which will be the use of a reflective journal/log as the primary data collection tool. It is likely that some of us will find it problematic to meet up in this way so I am proposing regular monthly ‘in-house’ meetings be planned for. That said, I would like to think that in the spirit of the project focus, prior teaching commitments can be planned and arranged in a creative way. Furthermore, online support via the use of Web CT (developed here at Edge Hill - watch this space!) will complement all F2F meetings. This will include a discussion board and email facility, and, from the outset, will give everyone access to a range of L2L readings/interactive resources and case studies illustrating how L2L theory has been or can be applied to practice. Information and/or activity concerning the notion of ‘action research’ and reflective processes will also be embedded within the portal. Most importantly, everyone engaged with the project will be encouraged to exchange ideas with one another, raise questions and add to the resource base.

3. **Getting started:** It is important that we get to know one another asap and that we gain some insight into each other’s proposed line of enquiry. As a way forward please would you email to me (rushl@edgehill.ac.uk) a short biography of yourselves and a 500 word synopsis of your proposed L2L enquiry by **Friday 22nd September 06**. I will collate this information and email it to all concerned by **Friday 29th September 06**. You may find the attached useful, to assist you with your initial thinking.

At the initial F2F cross-institutional meeting and via online materials you will be supported in developing this draft synopsis into a small-scale action-research proposal. Indeed, I anticipate us peer reviewing one another’s proposals with a view to enhancing the rigour of enquiry. You will also be supported in the use of a reflective journal/diary as a key tool for data collection. Whilst small-scale research on its own may not mean much in terms of ‘Research’, I am hoping that the cumulative effect of several projects will give some interesting insights and raise some implications, perhaps, into future practice and/or ongoing research into this area (ie L2L in ITT).

Please do not hesitate to be in touch to discuss any queries you may have concerning the above.

Very best,

Linda.

# Appendix 3

# Establishing dialogue within action research on learning to learn

‘A critical exploration of a learning to learn perspective and its pedagogical impact on teaching in ITT’, ESCalate project meeting, 3rd November 2006, Bristol

# Introduction

We raise here the central question as to how to establish dialogue within the context of action research projects on learning to learn perspectives for ITT. Dialogue has been seen as a central factor in enabling reflection on learning (Brockbank and McGill, 1998), but also through social constructivist theories in enabling learning itself. This was also seen clearly as a central feature in a recent review of the use of reflective practice in programmes of initial professional development for new members of academic staff (Kahn *et al*, 2006), a review which also covered a significant number of papers directly relevant to ITT. The series of prompts that follows draws on the framework developed within this review, specifically adapted for the purpose of establishing dialogue within the given context. This dialogue is seen as primarily based within practice, and one to which other elements such as theoretical considerations play a secondary role.

**1. How will you give shape to a dialogue centred around your practice on learning to learn?**

What specifically will this dialogue focus on? (You may wish to consider the actual **content** in terms of issues in relation to your practice in teaching trainee teachers how they might to learn to learn, and promote this with their own pupils. You will also wish to consider the **assumptions** that underpin your practice, perhaps in relation to the values that you hold, the exercise of power in relation to your practice or the personal qualities that you yourself need to exhibit in this.)

Who are your partners in this dialogue? (You may wish to consider the role of peers within your own institution, colleagues on this project or others. How will you ensure that they are given a real **voice** in a genuine dialogue – or exchange of ideas – with you? How will you ensure that **trust** is built up with these partners? How will your choice of partners encourage a crossing of **boundaries?** How will you develop new relationships and foster existing ones through your research – who else can you engage with? Such **relationships** are central to capacity for development, as Gustavsen, 2001, is clear. )

How will you sustain this dialogue, ensuring a problematic focus remains evident within it? (What **theoretical perspectives** can you draw on, what **data** will you collect for analysis? How will it be integrated into your **work context**, so that, realistically, time is made available for your research or that change is genuinely possible? How does it link with your own **identity** as a teacher educator or teacher, and connect to values that you hold to dearly?)

Note: the review clearly saw the literature indicating that it is only when we address such issues that we move beyond a consideration of technical issues, to a possibility of change at a much more fundamental levels. We can forget how deeply rooted the technical mentality is rooted in modernity, in contrast to a practical mentality that values relationships with others (see Elliott, 2005).

**2. Establishing dialogue in further dimensions**

How can you give shape to a dialogue with your colleagues on this project as a whole? (What would such a dialogue focus on? Is there scope to consider the assumptions that underpin your action research and the project as a whole? How could you sustain it given the pressures of collaborating at a distance? Who else might you involve in this dialogue?)

How can you ensure that dialogue informs work on learning to learn, amongst your students, and amongst the pupils whom your students might then teach?

# References

Brockbank, A. and McGill, I. (1998) *Facilitating Reflective Learning in Higher  
Education,* Society for Research into Higher Education/Open University Press, Buckingham

Elliott, J. (2005) ‘Becoming Critical: the failure to connect’, *Educational Action Research*, **13**(3), 359-374

Gustavsen, B. (2001) ‘Theory and Practice: the mediating discourse’, in P. Reason and H. Bradbury (eds) *Handbook of Action Research*, Sage Publications, London, pp 17-26

Kahn, P.E., Young, R.G., Grace, S., Pilkington, R., Rush, L., Tomkinson, C.B. and Willis, I. (2006) *The role and effectiveness of reflective practices in programmes for new academic staff: a grounded practitioner review of the research literature*, Higher Education Academy, York, [Online, accessed 4th October 2006], http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/4885.htm

Dr Peter Kahn MEd FSEDA

Higher Education consultant

1st November 2006

**Appendix 4**

**Potential *network* of individuals** (with whom the Project Leader/Peter Khan are to interview with a view to exploring their initial interest and possible engagement with L2L ‘experiments’ ie testing out of ideas).

Sue Burns (MJ)

Julie Dunkerley (MJ)

**\*Annie Fisher (MJ**

Wendy Geens (MJ)

**\*Laura Osborne (MJ)**

Carol Calcutt (EH)

Anthony Liversidge (EH)

Carol Evans (EH)

Gillian Goddard (EH)

**\*Graham Rogers (EH)**

**\*Ian Phillips (EH)**

Linda Griffiths (EH)

Nadine Baker (EH)

Nick Dowrick (EH)

Rob Burgess (EH)

Steve Tones (Chester)

Kate Wilkinson (Chester)

Francis Atherton (Chester)

Jeanne Broadbent (Chester)

Wendy Garner (Chester)

Alan Hodkinson (Chester)

Joy Roberts (Chester)

Carol ? (Chester)

PGCE Primary Team (Liverpool Hope)

**\*Individuals engaging with action research as part of the project**

**Other ITT institutions exploring teachers and beginning teachers’ practices**

* University of Ulster (Dr Lesley Abbott [l.abbott@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:l.abbott@ulster.ac.uk) and Professor Anne Moran [AAAnneMoran@aol.com](mailto:AAAnneMoran@aol.com) ) – Lesley and Anne delivered a paper at BERA 06 conference entitled: *Transforming initial teacher education: Progressing inclusive pedagogies and practices* (Lit suggests that L2L is inclusive so this paper may be worth looking at and/or the persons speaking with.)
* Newcastle University (Dr Steven Higgins [s.e.higgins@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:s.e.higgins@ncl.ac.uk) and Dr David Leat [d.j.k.leat@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:d.j.k.leat@ncl.ac.uk) ) – Steven and David delivered a paper at BERA 06 entitled: *What is learning to learn and how do we know it is happening?* Also, from the same university Dr Vivienne Baumfield [viv.baumfield@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:viv.baumfield@ncl.ac.uk) and an M. Butterworth delivered a paper entitled: *Teachers’ views of professional learning in learning to learn*
* Professor Anne Campbell ([andersc@hope.ac.uk](mailto:andersc@hope.ac.uk)) from Liverpool Hope University is currently researching into recent initiatives promoting teachers as researchers and has drawn on some *illustrative and illuminative cases from the field* that may be worth looking at. (I do see the notion of teacher as researcher being closely allied to L2L)
* At the University of Nottingham a number of individuals (Professor Christopher Day [Christopher.Day@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Christopher.Day@nottingham.ac.uk) Dr Alison Kington [Alison.Kington@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Alison.Kington@nottingham.ac.uk) Dr Quing Gu [Quin.Gu@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Quin.Gu@nottingham.ac.uk) ) have been *exploring the sustainment of commitment and resilience within teachers and the effects on pupils.*
* At the University of Oxford a study has been carried out entitled: *Practice makes perfect? Learning to Learn as a teacher* (Dr Hazel Hagger [haze.hagger@edstud.ox.ac.uk](mailto:haze.hagger@edstud.ox.ac.uk) Dr Katherine Burn [Katherine.burn@edstud.ox.ac.uk](mailto:Katherine.burn@edstud.ox.ac.uk) Mr Trevor Mutton [Trevor.mutton@edstud.ox.ac.uk](mailto:Trevor.mutton@edstud.ox.ac.uk) )

# Appendix 5

# Symposium proposal for BERA 2007

Symposium title:

Learning to learn in teacher education: the role of epistemology, conceptions of learning, pedagogies and dialogue

SIG addressed by the symposia: Teacher education and development

Convenor/Chair/discussant: Dr Linda Rush, Edge Hill University

# Overview

Learning in the 21st Century is demanding a shift from learning as the acquisition of knowledge and understanding of particular curriculum content to learning as a preparation for a lifetime of change. In this the notion ‘learning to learn’ has become a central focus, one which sees the ability to reflect on one’s learning and intentionally applying the results of one’s reflections to future learning as central to the learning process.

This symposium will report on one of the first investigations of learning to learn in the context of ITT. Generated from an ESCALATE funded project, the work has a particular focus on exposing connections between trainee teachers’ epistemological beliefs, conceptions of learning, and the conceptions underpinning their pedagogy. These are issues that are particularly pertinent to research within teacher education and development, but which have hitherto received little attention within research on learning to learn given its more immediate focus with the school setting, where teacher education and development is a less immediate focus.

We seek to explore the connections underpinning these various conceptions and beliefs, central as they are to teacher education, addressing more fundamental issues such as dialogue, self-identity, and the influence of the emerging professional context of practice; while also exploring links between such conceptions and learning to learn capacity.

The symposium will provide a forum for presentation and discussion of four related papers: the first of these centres on the personal epistemological beliefs of teacher trainees and the role that students beliefs about knowledge can have both for them as students in Higher Education as well as developing classroom practitioners; the second considers conceptions of learning to learn via an exploration of the kinds of learning conditions that are best suited to promoting deeper ways of engaging learners within knowledge construction; the third offers discussion of the potential for an enhanced relationship between critical thinking and subject pedagogy and the final presentation explores the potential of the role that classroom dialogue plays in cognitive development.

The convenor will take on the role of chair and discussant in order to enhance the coherence of the symposium, drawing on her experience in helping to coordinate interactions between the research projects. The symposium will begin with an overview by the chair, drawing out the learning to learn agenda and overarching links between the conceptions.

**Statement**

Countries eager to compete in a global economy that is increasingly knowledge-based faces a particular challenge in continuing to raise educational achievement across the board. While a managed approach that takes in such issues as assessment, content coverage, training and so on has often dominated, it is likely to be increasingly important to address more fundamental issues in relation to the nature of the learning.

Learning to learn is thus now being pursued at a range of levels, with a range of research and development projects now in evidence, and as also seen in the keynote presentation given by Guy Claxton at the last BERA conference. Research and practice so far carried out within relation to learning to learn has so far concentrated on schools themselves, as seen in Bristol’s ELLI project, or on lifelong learning more broadly, as through the Campaign for Learning. We have yet, however, to see significant research or practice devoted to learning to learn within a context of teacher education and development. This may stem in part from the extent to which this field is subject to direct influence from regulatory, funding and inspection regimes. And yet it is clear that the learning to learn agenda has implications for the way we go about planning for learning, assessing, evaluating and tracking, not only for the trainees/students when engaged with School Experience, but, also, for tutors in terms of their own pedagogic practice.

Each of the papers will be based on an action research project that has itself been carried out as part of a wider project of action research within ITT, in which the practitioner researcher operates as of an insider rather than an outsider seeking primarily to measure in some objective scientifically-determined fashion. In taking a practitioner approach to educational research the links with practice and policy are directly addressed, while still drawing on the theoretical basis in learning to learn and in underpinning conceptions and beliefs. The projects are also linked to a wider move to develop a network of practitioner researchers around learning to learn within teacher education, supported by ESCALATE.

This wider support project serves to stimulate explicit connections between these research projects. This provides a clear basis for ensuring that each paper is able to draw out specific connections with the other, and with the comments of the convenor/discussant drawing on the experience of coordinating this wider support project. At the same time, the four papers will emphasise different aspects of this followed-through approach, while still retaining the overall focus on exposing the links, in relation to learning to learn, between conceptions of knowledge, conceptions of learning and pedagogy; as well as the underlying processes that cut across all these areas, such as dialogue and self- identity.

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| **Abstract 1 (Laura Osborne): An exploration of beginning teachers’ beliefs about the nature of knowledge, its relationship to learning and how these beliefs (epistemologies) may affect their emerging pedagogy and philosophy of primary education.**  **Background to topic**  Personal epistemological beliefs reflect views about the nature of knowledge, how it can be gained and how certain it is (Perry 1981). In terms of a relationship with learning Schommer (1994:318) contends there is enough evidence to suggest that ‘epistemological beliefs are critical to the learning process’. Therefore students’ beliefs of knowledge are critical components of understanding about student learning (Hoffer, 2001) and will have implications for teaching at all stages. For students training in primary education who have a range of backgrounds and degrees from a variety of disciplines, this understanding is vital. If personal epistemological beliefs influence one’s cognitive and metacognitive operations in a significant way, then they also influence how teachers conceptualise teaching and will influence practice in the classroom (Chai 2006). If we are to encourage the learning to learn capacities in our beginning teachers it is essential for teacher educators first to understand the epistemological beliefs that pre-service teachers hold to foster mature epistemological outlooks that could facilitate educational reforms (Chai 2006).  **Research questions and/focus for enquiry**  The enquiry will focus on the ways in which the learning to learn capability of pre-service teachers can be informed by awareness of their own conceptions of learning and knowledge, and the factors that impact on these conceptions, with two central research questions:     1. In what ways are students training to teach primary aged children aware of their own conceptions of learning and knowledge, and able to draw on this self-awareness in shaping their own learning and teaching? 2. What factors impact on student teachers’ preconceptions of learning and teaching, with particular attention to the role of epistemology?   **Research methodology**  This practitioner research project falls within an interpretive paradigm as an evaluative case study. As such, the initial purpose is to evaluate and understand the epistemological beliefs of students from diverse backgrounds and disciplines as they engage in a the multidisciplinary approach to primary education, with this interpretation carried out by a practitioner able to work in a setting close to their own learning and their emerging practice as teachers. Within these initial stages there is limited scope for change to affect practice, although in the longer term elements of action research are likely to develop.  **Research methods and/or mapping of literature**  This research will employ a range of research methods designed to offer a range of interpretations.   * Two questionnaires will be employed: one relating to the students’ perceptions of learning (James *et al* 2002) and the other to gauge their epistemological beliefs (Schommer 1987). Interactions will be explored between them. The voices of others in the project will be consulted, as well as colleagues who are familiar with the concepts. * Interviews will take place with a focus group of students where their beliefs and understanding will be further interrogated. Possible links between epistemology and conceptions of learning as indicated within the questionnaires will be explored. The student’s interpretations in response to these connections will also be sought. * Observations of the students during teaching practice will further explore these possible connections. * Students will be invited to participate in an open-ended reflection on their learning experience.   **Analytical and/or theoretical frame**  At present we are engaging our postgraduate student teachers with the notion of learning to learn both as a process for themselves as learners and for the children they will be teaching. This is being driven by a cultural shift towards a ‘learning to learn’ approach in education for the 21st century. Students’ personal epistemological beliefs will influence their own learning and their engagement in the process of learning to learn both as learners themselves and as teachers of children. It has been suggested in a variety of developmental models (e.g. Kuhn and Weinstock 2002) that higher education students progress through developmental stages in their personal beliefs about epistemology. Schommer’s (1989) multidimensional approach, to be used in this study, will enable the identification of a more specific relationship between epistemology and learning. This, along with the other methods, will suggest links between student teachers beliefs of knowledge, the links to learning and the influence this will have as beginning teachers.  **Research findings and/or contribution to knowledge**  This project will develop our understanding of the way in which learning to learn capability is informed by or draws on conceptions of learning and of knowledge, strengthening the foundations of learning to learn agenda, particularly where developmental aspects in relation to the fundamental ideas and beliefs of student teachers are concerned. The research will further be used to inform the future teaching and learning of student teachers and the development of a postgraduate primary PGCE. |

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| **Abstract 2 (Dr Graham Rogers): Disciplinary study, Learning Technology and the forging of academic and professional values within an undergraduate ITT programme.**  **Background to topic**  The underpinning philosophy of the Learning to Learn (L2L) project resonates with ‘inquiry-based’ or ‘research-based’ approaches to teaching and learning as descriptors of an undergraduate ITT curriculum. The pedagogic corollary is an exploration of the kinds of learning conditions that are best suited to promoting deeper ways of engaging learners with knowledge construction in an academic as well as a professional domain and with a view towards reshaping student-teachers’ conceptions of learning.  This research project has a focus on factors that impact on shaping a professional self-identity among intending teachers who combine the academic study of history with a course of professional training at undergraduate level.  For the purposes of this project it is contended that the bedrock to the professional development of young teachers has to reside in students’ security in their own epistemological beliefs and practice. In short, becoming an effective teacher necessitates students’ deeper understanding of the processes of knowledge construction, and that can best be mediated through a disciplinary context.  It is also generally agreed that students’ attitudes towards learning in both an academic or professional field are largely determined by their first-year experience of higher education. Furthermore, it has been argued that the influence exerted by a training course and, especially, an associated academic-subject programme in shaping an emerging professional role, has been comparatively weak. There are competing tensions at work, but the positive impact of institutional programmes has to be measures against not only their content but the epistemological manner in which they are received.  **Research questions and/focus for enquiry**  This research project aims specifically to identify competing influences (both negative and positive) on students’ perceptions of ‘learning to teach’ within the academic domain of *history* over the course of a first year module entitled, Foundations to History Education’ within a Primary Education Programme, and to illuminate its impact on students’ wider conceptions of learning, teaching and ultimately professional practice itself.  **Research methods and/or mapping of literature**  The research methods sit within an action-research and dialogic model insofar as the data collection effectively charts a reflective journey on the part of both tutor and students.  For evaluative purposes the project draws on vicarious kinds of evidence:   * Entry-level questionnaires to elicit information on students’ preconceptions of learning in higher education and the professional objective of a course of academic study within a programme of teacher-training. * The text data of archived postings by both tutor and students to an online discussion board which may illuminate more sophisticated and evolving conceptions of the disciplinary nature of critical thinking as a core component of knowledge construction. * A mid-course unseen written task undertaken by Year 1 students as a means of acquiring formative feedback on levels of cognitive engagement with discipline-specific concepts. * A reflective journal, compiled by the tutor, which distils insights from the sequence of face-to-face teaching sessions. * Analysis of semi-structured interviews with a cross-section of the student cohorts drawn from Year 1 towards the completion of their subject-study course, and from Year 3 immediately prior to their embarking on their final assessed teaching practice. Text data analysis and interpretation will borrow from ethnographic research methodologies. * Post-course questionnaire that invites students into open-ended reflection on their learning experience of the course.     **Analytical and/or theoretical frame**  In relation to the over-arching precepts of the ‘L2L’ project, this investigation is predicated on a set of hypotheses:   * Learning environments, including the use of learning technology, can be created that model contexts in which students’ legitimate, epistemological understanding can begin to emerge. * Pedagogic strategies can be employed which bridge and synergise students’ epistemological understanding and their conceptions of learning and professional practice within the classroom setting.   **Research findings and/or contribution to knowledge**  In summary, the research will shed light on both students’ learning experiences of historical subject knowledge and draw attention to innovative course features that have the potential to influence students’ learning behaviour and their professional outlook on the practice of teaching.  More specifically, this project will:   * Identify changes to students’ concepts and values in relation to learning and teaching as the product of their academic experience of history subject study. * Evaluate the specific benefits of an e-learning design to an introductory module: ‘Foundations to History Education’ in modifying students’ conceptions of learning and teaching within the discipline * Provide insight into the synergies or dissonance between components of an Initial Teacher Training programme and subsequent impact on students’ professional values and practice as intending teachers. |

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| **Abstract 3 (Ian Phillips): Developing a thinking skills approach with beginning teachers on a PGCE programme**  **Background to topic**  History graduates beginning a one year teacher education course are typically able to operate as sophisticated thinkers within a historical context. In terms of critical thinking (Moon) a history graduate has to be able to work with complex ideas, to make effective use evidence to justify a reasonable judgement paying appropriate attention to a particular context. Whilst possessing a deep understanding of the methodology of the discipline, however, beginning history teachers often find it more difficult to articulate their thinking about solving a historical problem. They might best be described as operating from within an epistemologically sophisticated understanding of their discipline, but in terms of their metacognitive awareness they are relatively naïve. As beginning history teachers their perceptions of subject knowledge and of their role as subject teachers might best be characterised as absolutist: teachers as experts involved in the transmission of, largely factual, knowledge.  The key to developing the critical thinking of beginning history teachers lies therefore in persuading them to recognise and then apply their critical understanding of history to unfamiliar context of the pedagogy of history teaching. Developing the metacognitive capacity of beginning history teachers might be a significant step towards the implementation of a Learning to Learn philosophy.  The initial curriculum studies element of the history PGCE course was re-shaped to focus beginning teachers understanding of critical thinking skills. This was done by setting up a series of workshop activities which modelled teaching and learning activities. Plenaries and on-line discussions then focused on the groups critical thinking. Working from the familiar area of their academic discipline they were challenged, first to recognise how they worked through a series of problems and later to begin to understand the connection between thinking and learning. The workshop activities were designed to illustrate how the familiar, but largely unconscious process of thinking and learning as a history graduate, has a direct bearing on the Thinking Skills or the philosophy of Learning to Learn in the secondary history curriculum. During the Spring Term teaching observations and feedback dialogues will provide additional evidence of beginning teachers understanding of the ideas and principles of Learning to Learn  **Research questions and/focus for enquiry**  This investigation seeks to explore specific issues in trying to understand how history graduates teachers become effective history teachers. The research project is essentially an investigation into how beginning teachers learn new skills and understandings or developing an awareness of how the distinctive disciplinary ‘knowledge’ of history is transferable to the secondary school history curriculum.  **Research methods and/or mapping of literature**  Operating within an interpretive paradigm, linked to practitioner research, a range of evidence will be drawn on from:   1. Analysis of workshop modelling activities and through Web Ct compiled discussions – weekly topics / plenaries compiled over the course of Autumn Term. 2. Interviews with individual trainees in school following lesson observations.   **Analytical and/or theoretical frame**  With a view to gaining understanding of that being explored, a grounded theory approach will be adopted. As such, emphasis will be placed on observation, conversation and interview. Comprehensive notes made on the separate strands of data will be made and then triangulated. Emerging categories or themes will be identified and drawn on to highlight theoretical positions which, in turn, will feed back into the observations and theory building.  **Research findings and/or contribution to knowledge**  It is anticipated that this evidence will enable an understanding of the following issues:   * Beginning teacher’s epistemological understanding of subject knowledge and pedagogic subject knowledge. * An understanding of the metacognitive abilities which history graduates demonstrate in relation to the study of history as a graduate discipline compared to the pedagogy of history teaching. * Beginning teachers level(s) of awareness of transferability of these critical thinking skills across disciplines. * The impact of the philosophy of Learning to Learn on the practice of beginning teachers |

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| **Abstract 4 (Annie Fisher): An investigation into postgraduate trainee teachers' epistemologies about the role of dialogue in teaching and learning: fostering 'reflection and reciprocity' through modeling.**  **Background to topic**  A growing body of evidence (for example, Alexander, 2005; Myhill, 2004; Smith, 2004; Skidmore, 2003; Wragg and Brown, 2001; Mercer, 2000, 1995) indicates that classroom dialogue is teacher dominated, focusing upon question-answer routines which close down opportunities for cognitive growth. Of particular concern is the lack of speculative talk for developing pupil cognition and failure to use questions to hand over responsibility to children at 'critical moments', showing a discrepancy between awareness of the value of higher-order questions, and practice.  The taught programme for English focuses on developing trainee teachers’ understanding of higher order questioning: classroom observations reveal that this is not sufficient. An understanding of the role that dialogue plays in developing cognition is fundamental. A 'Learning to Learn' perspective was adopted within certain English sessions, drawing upon Claxton's (2004:5) work on the 'learning muscles' of reciprocity and reflectiveness, and the Campaign for Learning's 'dispositions for learning'. Tutor modeling of strategies for communication and collaboration for learning was combined with a more dialogic approach to managing discussion (Alexander, 2004) to teach postgraduates to develop, and value, a more reflective and reciprocal approach to their own discussion, and that of their pupils.  **Research questions and/focus for enquiry**  The research seeks to outline the initial beliefs of a group of postgraduate trainee teachers in relation to the place of dialogue for learning. It draws attention to the relevant course features which have been designed to impact upon those beliefs, and examines how far these features have been successful in raising the trainees' awareness of strategies for developing cognitive dialogue.  **Research methods and/or mapping of literature**  The project will draw upon a variety of data using a range of methods  . Information will be drawn from an entry-level questionnaire about perceptions of learning related to dialogue;  . A focus group of trainees will be interviewed to ascertain any change in their perceptions about the role of dialogue, and which aspects of theoretical underpinning they are able to identify;  . An observational visit during teaching practice to a smaller group to ascertain how they are promoting dialogue;  . A post-course questionnaire inviting reflection upon their learning experience in the management of dialogue.  **Analytical and/or theoretical frame**  This is an action research project in which Postgraduate primary trainees and a lecturer in Initial Teacher Education collaborated as equal partners, drawing on insights from participant action research (Kemmis and McTaggart, cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Analysis of data is undertaken using a qualitative approach, and multiple perspectives are drawn upon in order to enhance the richness of the resulting analysis.  **Research findings and/or contribution to knowledge**  The research project  . map trainees' prior conceptions of talk and its relevance to learning and teaching.  . evaluate the learning outcomes of the learning to learn perspective applied within a number of English sessions in college.  . explore changes to trainees' perceptions and epistemologies of talk in relation to learning and teaching in English  This will enable the development of models or frameworks that open up both practical and theoretical understanding in relation to these issues. While focusing on the discipline of English, the importance of dialogue more broadly opens scope for issues raised within this research to stimulate further research in other domains. |