

# ESCalate news

The newsletter of the Education Subject Centre - advancing learning and teaching in education

## Keeping you informed...

Supporting Learning and Teaching for

10 Years

Subject Centre for Education ESCalate

This edition of ESCalate news comprises an eclectic collection of articles chosen to illustrate the breadth of work being carried out by the community to improve teaching and learning in the field of Education.

We start with a section focusing on students. ESCalate's mission is, in part, to produce and broker resources which explore ways of enhancing the learning experiences of Education students. As partners in this process, students can be seen as a tremendous resource and institutions are actively seeking out new ways to engage students in bringing about innovative solutions to teaching and learning challenges.

Our e-learning and e-portfolio events have a history of booking up very quickly and we know that practitioners are interested in expanding their knowledge in the area of technology enhanced learning. So, in this issue, we offer two articles around the use of video to support video conferencing and reflective teaching. Following this, ESCalate academic consultant Steve Rose writes a piece about supporting the scholarly activity of education

practitioners in Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE) colleges.

Next, we have a section to update you on the progress of the projects we are currently funding in the areas of student wellbeing and teacher educators for the 21st century.

Also in this issue we hear from colleagues working on the educational evidence portal (eep) and the Higher Education Academy's EvidenceNet. We all have our favourite resource repositories, unfortunately as you will know, some of these are now under threat with cuts in funding. One recommendation of the Strategic Forum for Research in Education ([www.sfre.ac.uk](http://www.sfre.ac.uk), final report p.36) was that some of these collections should be consolidated into a 'UK Education Information Service' which should be online, freely available and comprehensive. This may be a good way forward for some as they consider the sustainability of their resources in the long-term.

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To finish we have a couple of event reports followed by an 'in conversation' piece with Acting Director Jocelyn Wishart. She was recently heard saying that 'in times of change we need to celebrate our successes and continue to provide support to the benefit of our community' or to re-use an old mantra 'keep calm and carry on' – sentiments echoed by many working across Higher Education in these changing times.

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# ESCalate news

## **ESCalate @ Bristol**

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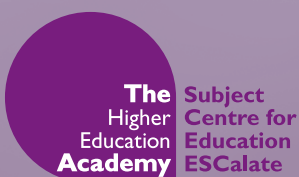
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If you have any ideas or copy that you would like to see included in a future newsletter please get in touch: [teresa.nurser@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:teresa.nurser@bristol.ac.uk)

We are especially interested in items which:

- Show innovative practice in your Education Department;
- Celebrate National Teaching Fellows and other awards for teaching and learning;
- Showcase student achievement.



Working with colleagues to support students whilst in Higher Education is a key part of ESCalate's activity. The following articles show three very different strands of innovative work.

# Understanding and supporting the e-learning experiences of students with disabilities

**Jane Seale**

Disabled students at the University of Southampton have been working with researchers to produce an online resource for both students and academics that offers handy hints and tips on technologies and strategies that can be used to make e-learning easier for disabled students. The resource is the result of a two year project called LEXDIS which was funded by JISC, under its learner experience programme.

Using participatory research methods, students were involved in all aspects of the research process; from deciding the research questions to designing the project website (Seale *et al.* 2008a). A key

aspect of student participation was the sharing of their technology experiences, and in particular the strategies they have developed to enable them to use a wide range of technologies to support their learning. The students' technology "stories" have been integrated into an online database that can be searched by students and lecturers who may be looking for ideas or information about assistive technologies that students use, along with their strategies to solve some of the issues that arise or applications that students use (by choice or as a course requirement) that may cause difficulties. ►

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Screenprint of LEXDIS Home Page

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### Digital agility, agency and empowerment

Analysis of the students' technology experiences suggest that disabled students are very digitally "agile", they are extremely familiar with a wide range of technologies and can critically evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in relation to their learning needs; they use a wide range of strategies to enable them to use the technologies to learn effectively and they have relatively high levels of confidence in their own ability to use technologies. In addition, many disabled students have developed a strategic fluency that enables them to make complex decisions about whether or not to use technologies to support their learning. On some occasions, such decisions can involve deciding not to use technology (Seale *et al.* 2008b).

These findings are significant for lecturers and those who work in support services in terms of prompting us to recognise the agency of disabled students in

relation to making choices about their technology use as well as to reflect on our assumptions regarding the abilities of disabled students on our courses. The findings relating to digital agility can be used to support an empowerment model of inclusive education and disability support whereby the strengths of disabled students are recognised and the focus is less on remediation and more on supporting learners to pursue their learning goals (Seale *et al.* 2010).

### Hindrances and barriers to successful e-learning and technology use

Despite the apparent digital agility of disabled students, the students in the LEXDIS project did describe instances where their learning had been adversely affected. There were a number of reasons for this:

- Access to appropriate technologies had been hindered or denied
- Inappropriate technologies or pedagogies underpinning technology use had been employed

- Students felt they did not have enough time to learn how to use some of the more complex assistive technologies

A prime example of access being hindered or denied can be illustrated through the following quote from a student who felt strongly that lecturers and universities should be more flexible in their willingness to provide electronic versions of learning materials:

*Having things in electronic format is essential for me to cope with the demands of my course. I would be drowning under a sea of paper, otherwise!! I do not have the dexterity to manipulate masses of sheets. So paper material is difficult for me to locate, and difficult to display properly when writing [...] I think they (lecturers) should just be aware that physically disabled students may well benefit from electronic resources. They shouldn't automatically assume that disabled students will definitely want things in electronic format. However, they should be aware that it is likely that many will want this [...] There is so much more than lecture notes, as well [...] Some lecturers are pretty good. They will put up quite a lot in electronic format, but even the good ones, at the moment, they don't put on as much as they realise they could. [...] For example, there is something in the library now that will scan in whole books, and the library said to me: "Oh well, at the moment we only use that for academics".*

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Examples that students shared with us, where being required to use a particular technology could be considered practically or pedagogically inappropriate included:

- Requiring students to learn curriculum content by accessing material only available via complex specialist software applications that can be extremely stressful to learn to use, particularly for students with mental health issues.
- Requiring all students to post contributions to an online discussion forum, even though access to the Internet outside of university hours is problematic for some disabled students, depending on where they live.

*The website gets jammed up and crashes. On MSN you can see who's logged on. On there you can't. If you put a message on, you can sit there for 2 hours waiting for a reply. I had to continue to go back to the library. Those who have internet at home can check it all day. But, I went to the library in my pyjamas because it got so late! This is unfair. If you don't communicate on there, you don't pass. The student residence are the ones who don't have the internet. Ours are 40 years old and condemned.*

Examples like this get us to think carefully about what the purpose of higher education is as well as to examine our definitions of inclusive education. For students, higher education should be a challenge; they need to be stretched and facilitated to reach further than they thought they possibly could. However, it is important that lecturers choose the right hurdles with which to challenge students and not to get students to jump unnecessary hurdles that take time and effort but afford no real learning advantage. This is true for all students, but particularly true for many disabled students who are already exerting a great amount of time and energy "managing" their disability and find they have to be very strategic about their learning as a result.

Whilst some resentment exists amongst non-disabled students about the technology that is available to disabled students through their Disabled Students Allowance, evidence from the LEXDIS projects suggests that disabled students do not always feel able to take advantage of the technologies, particularly voice recognition software which can take days to learn how to use:

*... when I got all my software in autumn last year, and they said: "You need to have your training on this" – as you quite rightly have said – I did feel like I was doing 2 courses and that was, frankly, too much. I had to stay with my old bad habits because I just didn't feel I had the time to take out to learn something new to help me. It was a vicious circle, really.*

“

**Analysis of the students' technology experiences suggest that disabled students are very digitally "agile"**

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## Key tips for lecturers on supporting the e-learning of disabled students

The examples given here, as well as the narratives contained within the LEXDIS website, can be used to derive several key tips for lecturers and other academics who are supporting the e-learning of disabled students:

1. **Increase the level of provision for online materials.** Despite the fact that many students comment on issues of accessibility and ease of use of some of the materials online, this method of sharing resources is vital for those who cannot handle paper based materials easily. Scanning and using optical character recognition to cope with paper based materials takes time and the results are not always sufficiently accurate for easy reading with text to speech or Braille translation.

2. **Think carefully about the impact on disabled students of a huge variation in the “look and feel” of modules or courses provided via Virtual Learning Environments.** Offering teaching staff the ability to adapt the virtual learning to their own personal specifications may be causing navigational concerns for students who have to spend longer on task to find items and work within the various different VLE courses they are required to use, due to differences and inconsistencies in structure and organisation across courses.

3. **Increase the level of awareness for the use of alternative formats.** There remains a lack of awareness regarding the impact that

inaccessible teaching and learning resources can have on disabled students. This does not mean that innovative teaching materials using interactive online applications should be avoided but rather that alternatives may need to be on offer that can provide a similar learning outcome. Even the most basic PDFs and PowerPoints can also cause problems if they cannot be read on the screen with speech output or accessed via the keyboard.

4. **Be prepared to recognise the digital literacy skills that many disabled students have** and build on these by providing more opportunities for improved learning outcomes through an increased choice of multimedia tools and resources.

5. **Design and develop learning opportunities and support systems that recognise the significant factors that influence disabled students’ use of technology, notably time.** All disabled learners cite ‘TIME’ as a real issue that influences their decisions about whether to use technology and whether to seek support to use technology. ‘Just-in-time’ learning seems to be the most appreciated type of training. When students have a problem, is when they want to learn the solution. This needs to be taken into account when thinking about library training, VLE and other technology training sessions.

More information about the project and further guidance material can be found at: [www.lexdis.org](http://www.lexdis.org)

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Jane Seale is Professor of Education at the University of Plymouth. Jane’s teaching and research interests lie at the intersections between disability, technology and education. Her work focuses in particular on the factors that influence or sustain the digital exclusion of disabled learners. Jane is currently Digital Inclusion consultant to the ESRC funded Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Research Programme where she is working to synthesise and update current research in the field of Digital Inclusion. Jane worked on the LEXDIS project with colleagues Mike Wald and E.A. Draffan from the Electronics and Computer Science department at the University of Southampton.

# Students as change agents at Exeter University

**Harriet Whewell**

I was the 'Students as Change Agents' Coordinator at Exeter University for the academic year of 2009-2010. The scheme, now moving into its third year, has become an innovative and key aspect of student engagement at the University.

The concept of the scheme began from the need to increase student involvement in the teaching and learning experience. The National Union of Students had communicated to universities the importance of engaging students in the process of quality assurance and formulation of the curriculum. Within Exeter itself, the Students Guild was concerned as to whether a true representation of students' views about the learning experience was being heard. So the 'Students as Change Agents' project began in

response to these concerns, to highlight aspects of teaching that needed to be improved and to get students actively engaged in making positive changes to their course.

The aim of the project was for students to choose their own topic of research that addressed an area of learning and teaching that was of concern within their subject and come up with recommendations for improving these issues. By getting students to run their own research and data collection, a better representation of the student voice could be made, with innovative solutions created by those students engaged in the learning experience.

My involvement began in October 2009, as part of a graduate placement scheme run at the University. My role was to talk to the students involved and guide them

through the research process, helping with ideas, overcoming issues and acting as the link between students and staff. As a psychology graduate, I could use my experience with quantitative and qualitative research to assist students through data collection and interpreting their results. My supportive role was made possible through funding from the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Education at Exeter.

So, to begin, we needed students. University students tend to be very engaged with societies and extra-curricular activities, but many individuals seem less motivated to engage directly with academic processes and many are unaware that they can instigate changes that have an impact on the curriculum. So we decided to approach those students who were already engaged with their departments, as Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) members. With the help of the Students Guild, the scheme was advertised to those students involved in the SSLC in different departments.

Regular SSLC meetings allow students to flag up issues and concerns that occur within their subject. However, many

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students feel that although the SSLC system allows them to communicate issues with staff, in some cases changes are slow, or fail to happen. The 'Students as Change Agents' concept created a positive reaction among SSLC members as it allowed students to change and improve the teaching experience directly. For staff, research-based evidence would provide justification for the department to implement certain changes, whilst the project ethos would help develop the role of the SSLC to become engaged in a constructive process, finding positive solutions for dealing with concerns, rather than an opportunity to complain.

We received applications from a variety of students; first years to postgraduates, individuals to groups, and representing a variety of disciplines such as Biosciences, Archaeology, Law and Engineering. Data was then collected by students using questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. I then looked at the results with the students and helped create recommendations and solutions to the issues of concern. Findings and recommendations were then presented to the department in the form of research reports.

Projects ranged from academic writing support in Biosciences, employability in Archaeology, technology aided learning in the Business School, assessment methods in Law, and improving sustainability practice and awareness across the University as a whole. All of the students presented their findings at a Conference in June that was

attended by fellow students, University staff, Student Guild representatives and visitors from external organisations such as ESCalate and the QAA. Students' findings and recommendations were met with interest and will be disseminated and implemented within their respective departments.

Below are some quotations from students who ran projects, which show the impact and implications of this scheme on a personal level for those who took part:

*"I think the most exciting part of this project has been to see that it is possible to make a change even at such a large institution. Before this project I did not expect it to be possible to make a change, but this has shown me that with a little work and dedication you can make things happen."*

*"[The most exciting/interesting aspects to this project have been]...Promoting and encouraging debate on big topics on a college level. Seeing ideas being shared across the college. Hopefully making a lasting impact."*

*"It has been hard to balance with studies but glad to have persevered as has been very rewarding."*

There have been several impacts of this scheme. Those particular students involved in running the projects have learnt valuable skills and have benefited from being

involved at a high level within their schools. Their fellow students have benefited and will continue to benefit from the improvements made as an outcome of the projects and have been made aware of the potential for future engagement. Staff and the University as a whole have received valuable and creative input from those students involved, with students moving more towards being co-contributors within the University.

And for me personally, I have learnt a great deal about the importance of engagement in University life. Working with such a variety of students was really inspiring. Their enthusiasm, creativity and dedication to make a difference to the learning experience led to the success of the projects. In fact, working on this scheme encouraged me to go back to University to study for a Masters degree this year and to be involved in the educational experience as a student once again.

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Harriet Whewell has been acting as the Students as Change Agents Coordinator for the past year at Exeter University. Prior to this, she completed a degree in Psychology at Durham University. Since finishing her post at Exeter, she has gone on to study for an MA at Kings College, London.

For more information about University of Exeter's Students as Agents for Change project please see: <http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/educationenhancementprojects/change/>



# Exploring the psychological wellbeing of students in Higher Education

## Daphne Evans

With the significant increase in young people entering higher education, interest in issues relating to the mental health and wellbeing of young people has also increased. To reach their potential, students must be able to cope with the rigours of academic study, and engage socially with the university community and beyond. Institutions too, have a duty of care for these individuals and thus need to ensure that their strategies for supporting students are robust and effective.

I applied to ESCalate to carry out an innovative study on student wellbeing and mental health. The study employed three methods: first, participation of Hostel Wardens, themselves students, employed by the university to gather information from students; second, a focus group session made up of student volunteers to discuss issues relating to mental health and wellbeing; and finally, an online questionnaire which explored self-esteem and health and wellbeing.

Initial analysis would appear to indicate that *relative* to the student population, cases of *serious* mental health problems are minimal. However, it is evident that within the population that a large number

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of students, particularly females do have mental health issues, in the main – elevated anxiety levels and depressive episodes. Our findings suggest that when stressful issues do arise they are often related to alcohol and/or communal living. Alcohol, although initially providing a measure of euphoria and disinhibition which may be considered helpful in a novel situation, is also a depressant and can induce anxiety. Amongst university students, in general, excessive alcohol use is seen as ‘part of the student experience and social scene’, however, those who may have little experience in the consumption of alcohol may also have little knowledge of its after effects. The findings also suggest that ‘communal’ living may have negative effects in terms of mental health and wellbeing, for example lack of privacy, noise, relationship issues etc. The data also indicate that many students have not developed sufficient coping

mechanisms that might help them to deal with the demands of being a ‘student’. The University Counselling Service indicated that demand for support over a wide range of issues – anxiety, depression, issues of self harm and emotional distress – recurred throughout the year.

Our initial findings suggest that current measures used by the university and common to other universities are reasonably effective in supporting students though it is apparent that the role of the hostel warden is pivotal in providing initial support and reassurance.

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Dr Daphne Evans is a freelance consultant and part-time lecturer. Her specialist area of interest is the field of adolescence, particularly health and wellbeing issues.

Daphne Evans: Freelance consultant  
Charlotte Greenway: Trinity University College

**Project page: Student Wellbeing and Mental Health:**  
**<http://escalate.ac.uk/7341>**

# Offering support from the beginning

**Emma Jackson**

My doctoral research is in partnership with Aimhigher: a Labour government initiative concerned with raising the aspirations of young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds (DfES, 2006). To achieve this, Aimhigher provides young people with the opportunities to experience university life, to show that it is attainable for everyone (DfES, 2006).

One of the ways this is achieved is through summer schools, which are suggested to be the most successful Aimhigher programme to raise young people's aspirations (DfES, 2005). This may be because summer schools consolidate young people's exposure to a university environment, raise awareness and promote an aspiration to achieve (HEFCE, 2008). To explore whether summer schools may influence progression to higher education, Aimhigher Herefordshire and Worcestershire conducted a piece of tracking research, and I along with Val Yates, Head of Widening Participation, presented the findings at the FACE 2010 conference. Two hundred and forty one previous University of Worcester summer school attendees from 2004 to 2009 were sent a postal questionnaire, which included both open and closed questions so respondents could provide

a descriptive account of their experiences.

Respondents were asked to report on their educational pathway (whether they had continued studying after compulsory education); from the respondents aged 18 or over (46.9%), 69.4% of them were either studying or had completed an undergraduate degree. When asked to explain how they had chosen their academic route, the majority of the respondents reported it was due to an interest in a subject or a long-term goal they wished to pursue. From the responses a minority wrote that attending a University of Worcester summer school had influenced their decisions to progress to higher education (*"going to the summer school really influenced my decision in a positive way as it gave a first hand experience"*), suggesting that summer schools can raise aspiration and progression to higher education (HEFCE, 2008). Supporting this, respondents reported how attending a summer school had *"strengthened the view that university was right for me"* and *"I had no idea what university life was like but after attending I definitely wanted to go"*.

The raising of young people's aspirations may be due to summer schools providing young people with information about higher education and an experience of university life (HEFCE, 2008). The respondents suggested this was achieved through the ambassadors (*"the uni representatives were supportive and well informed"*) and lectures (*"I found the lectures interesting, particularly being able to do some practical work which usually you wouldn't do before uni"*) thus supporting previous research that university

ambassadors are key messengers in widening participation activities such as summer schools (Pennell, West and Hind, 2005; Austin and Hatt, 2005). The respondents also reported how the residential and social activities were a key part of their experience; *"I loved staying in the halls and the evening social activities, I still laugh looking back now! Ultimate Frisbee was awesome."* This may be due to the residential aspect of the summer school giving the attendees a taster of what it would be like to study away from home (HEFCE, 2008).

To conclude, the respondents positively rated their summer school experience (95.9%) because *"it helps give you information about studying and uni life that can be influential in the future"*. However, the research results are tentative due to the response rate (20.3%), which may affect whether the results are representative of the sample population (Barclay et al., 2002). Further tracking of previous summer school attendees is required to explore whether the findings presented are reflective of all Aimhigher summer school attendees.

Being accepted to present at the conference and being granted the ESCalate bursary surprised me as I have only been researching in the field of widening participation for less than a year, but I now know both organisations are keen to support early career researchers. I would like to thank ESCalate for providing me with the opportunity to attend the FACE conference, as the enthusiasm that ran through the thought provoking conference has spurred me on in my doctoral research.

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Emma is a second year doctoral research student at the University of Worcester. Her PhD is in partnership with Aimhigher Herefordshire and Worcestershire and she is evaluating their programme 'ThinkSmart'. The programme aims to improve secondary school pupil's motivation, self-esteem and engagement in school.

Technology can increase the potential for practitioners to deliver interesting and stimulating teaching. ESCalate has supported the following two examples of using video to enhance learning.

## Interactive use of video conferencing in Initial Teacher Training

**Jan Machalski**

Our study was based on the perceived need to make the boundaries between initial teacher training in the University College and the placement school less distinct. I am subject leader for Science PGCE at Bishop Grosseteste University College and I have been looking for ways to ensure the training provided is up to date and combines both academic rigour with what is going on in the classroom. One of our mentors, Jenny, teaches on the PGCE and it was with her we developed and tried out a new idea of using a video link to contribute to an understanding of both planning and Assessment for Learning (AfL).

We started by reviewing the literature to see what other people were doing in the field. We found that the most common use for video conferencing in the context of initial teacher training was to aid in trainee placement supervision (Dudt and Garrett, 1997) and for communication between trainees when on placement (Hu and

Wong, 2006). However there was some work on developing subject knowledge and pedagogy (Coyle, 2004) but this did not involve the kind of pattern of video conferencing use we intended to develop.

The study was based at a local community school and a group of 22 Science trainees were taken by bus to the school. The school has extremely good video link hardware set up within the school by the Lincoln 7 Specialist Schools Group. On the first occasion the group were able to jointly plan a lesson with Jenny being able to see how an experienced teacher considers each aspect of planning using the school scheme of work, National Curriculum guidelines, government strategies and exam board documentation. The ability to consider all these aspects of planning is a difficult thing for a new trainee but actually being in the school and seeing the realities of the process first hand was a real advantage. They then

Jan Machalski: Bishop Grosseteste University College

**Project page: *Sharing Ideas: Interactive use of video conferencing in ITT*: <http://escalate.ac.uk/6800>**

Study participants

**we developed and tried out a new idea of using a video link to contribute to an understanding of both planning and Assessment for Learning (AfL)**

left Jenny’s laboratory and were able to see how the planned lesson developed by watching on a large plasma screen in the library. Following the lesson the trainees were able to jointly evaluate the effectiveness of the planning with Jenny. About two weeks later the trainees returned to the school and followed the same pattern but this time with the focus on AfL implementation.

Evaluations of this whole process by trainees were extremely positive. Comments included “It gave insight into how to deliver a structured lesson”, “It linked theory to practice in a realistic way” and overall “It was a very valuable and memorable experience”. To summarise, trainees valued such early opportunities to see the reality of science teaching in a partnership school. They also highly valued the idea of seeing the impact of what

seems to them very much theoretical concepts directly within a classroom setting.

When we saw the value of this whole process we decided to share our ideas and on talking to ESCalate they suggested that we apply for a sharing ideas grant. This helped us with the money for travel to conferences and gave us enough money to make a short film about the process which we plan to upload to YouTube. We have now presented at the TEAN conference in Glasgow and the Teaching and Learning conference at Bishop Grosseteste University College, Lincoln. These have been valuable times when other practitioners have gained from our experiences and have been able to contribute to the further development of our ideas.

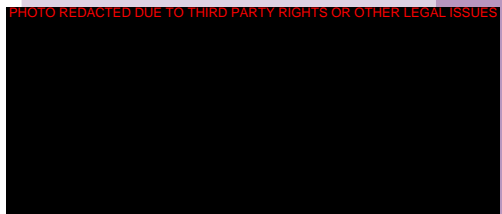
*The author would like to acknowledge the invaluable support of Jenny Dobbs in this investigation.*

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Jan is a Lecturer at Bishop Grosseteste University College. She has taught on the Foundation Degree for Learning Practitioners, its progression route and taken responsibility for the coordination of Science PGCE. Prior to this she worked in a range of Secondary Schools taking various posts of responsibility including Head of Year, Head of Biology, Head of Science and Assistant Head Teacher.

# Seeing is believing:

## How the use of video can support the development of student teachers' reflective thinking

**John McCullagh**

Given the importance placed on reflective thinking within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and the accessibility of digital video technology our ESCalate funded research project set out to identify how video technology may support the development of student teachers. We agree with Loughran's (2002) assertions that encouraging our students to reflect

is not enough and that experience alone does not lead to learning. A group of 18 students in the final year of their undergraduate degree programme in Primary Education were paired up to plan, teach and evaluate a series of five enquiry-based science lessons during school placement. Each pair recorded video material of each other's teaching during the second

lesson from which they identified an aspect of their practice for development. Another recording of their final lesson allowed any progress to be identified. The students were required to edit their collection of video clips, which included video diaries of their reflections and references to relevant literature, into a final video outlining their reflective journey. Questionnaires, semi-

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John F McCullagh: Stranmillis University College, Belfast  
Fergal Corscadden: Stranmillis University College, Belfast  
James Stewart: W5 Discovery Centre Belfast

**Project page: *Research project 2009: Using video for the identification and assessment of learning in initial teacher education:***  
<http://escalate.ac.uk/6306>

structured interviews and the analysis of the students' post-lesson evaluations written before and then after viewing their lesson were used to gather data.

We found that post-lesson evaluations written after watching the video recording differed significantly from those written straight after teaching. Evaluations based on the video included more evidence based judgements, made stronger connections between the student teachers' actions and their impact on pupils and stated clearer intentions for future teaching. Using Larivee's (2008) descriptors we classified two thirds of the additional observations as Level 3 (on a scale of Levels 1-4) 'Pedagogical Reflection' and concur with her view of the importance of mediation and support in developing reflective thinking.

The key advantages afforded by this use of video included:

- The opportunity to get a 'pupils' eye view' of the lesson.
- The re-evaluation or confirmation of initial post-lesson impressions.
- Reassurance that the lesson was effective or 'not as bad as I thought!'
- Multiple perspectives via shared viewing with tutor/teacher/peers.

The students found that the recording and analysis of the follow-up lesson and the video editing task transformed the usually passive process of evaluation into a more interactive, motivating and forward looking activity.

Our findings reinforce the identified potential for video to enhance detail, perspective and objectivity (Sherin and van Es, 2005) and encourage collaboration among communities of learners (Newton & Sorenson (2010), Rickard et al. (2009)). They also concur with Dewey's key characteristics of reflection, as outlined by Rodgers (2002), as a rigorous, meaning-making collaborative process driven by a motivation for improvement. Encouraged by the positive feedback from our students, we intend to develop the use of video across other programmes.

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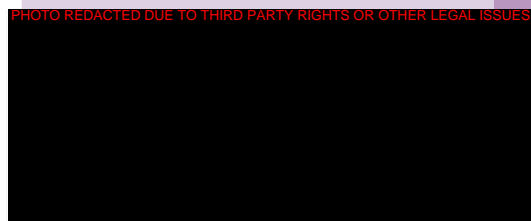
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John McCullagh is a Senior Lecturer in Science Education at Stranmillis University College Belfast. His research interests include the use of video and multi-media technology within education. He has led research projects funded by the AstraZeneca Science Teaching Trust on the use of books and stories in primary science and on the role of digital technology within science enquiry.



**Our findings reinforce the identified potential for video to enhance detail, perspective and objectivity... and encourage collaboration among communities of learners**



For a long time now we have supported the Further Education sector in delivering Higher Education courses. Here, Steve Rose calls for continued support of scholarly activity within colleges and gives us some examples of institutions where good practice is being supported.

# Making room for scholarly activity and research within HE in FE

**Steve Rose**

Around 10% of Higher Education (HE) is delivered within Further Education Colleges (FECs). 'HE in FE' is a significant element of the Higher Education landscape and plays an increasingly important role in enabling access to higher education opportunity for 'non-traditional' students who require local, flexible and often personalised provision.

FECs providing HE are not research-intensive institutions and staff working within them are more likely to be teaching practitioners as opposed to teacher-researchers.

Nonetheless there is an increasing expectation that FECs delivering HE will need to create and sustain a recognisable 'HE ethos' within which staff are able to engage in scholarly activity and research to support teaching and learning. Greater emphasis is being placed upon appropriate staff development and updating the profession in response to the recent introductions of the

Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review process, (IQER), Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (FDAP) and the development of Higher Education Strategies.

The importance of research and scholarly activity as integral factors within FECs' planning and management of their HE provision is constantly highlighted as an area for improvement.

Students choosing to study for HE qualifications within a FEC have expectations that the experience, whilst being different to that of an undergraduate at university, will not be an inferior one. FECs have an excellent track record of providing high quality teaching and practitioners are adept at managing demanding teaching commitments which span both FE and HE programmes. It is vital that staff delivering HE within mixed economy institutions are (like their university counterparts) supported in their engagement with scholarly activity and research if they are to keep up to date with



developments in their disciplines and appropriate HE pedagogies.

There are a growing number of examples of how FECs are supporting both research and staff undertaking scholarly activity appropriate to HE teaching and learning in order to create a strong 'HE brand' and an enhanced sense of professional identity. These colleges are making strident efforts to establish, sustain and develop a flourishing research and scholarship culture as an institutional priority. Examples include Bournemouth and Poole College where an HE Research Group meets annually to discuss a theme for research papers and then present them at a conference later in the year. Also City of Bristol College, which has strong links with local universities, has in place a variety of activities which aim to support staff engaged in research. These include an annual research conference, a small grant bursary scheme, regular HE seminars and an electronic knowledge and information exchange system to keep staff up to date with research activities in the region. The Research Centre at City College Norwich supports an annual research conference in addition to publishing a Research and Development Bulletin for staff. The college also provides a research and evaluation service both externally and internally and supports staff engaged in teaching HE by bidding for and securing external funding for projects.

These examples are now well-established beacons of good practice in the HE in FE sector but ►

“  
**The importance of research and scholarly activity as integral factors within FECs' planning and management of their HE provision is constantly highlighted as an area for improvement.**  
 ”

just how does an FEC with aspirations to create and sustain its own HE ethos begin to create a culture of research and scholarly activity which will engage teaching staff and enhance the experience of its HE students?

A good place to start might be simply to establish a dedicated space within the college where staff teaching on HE programmes can work either individually or collaboratively to pursue their research interests either around subject disciplines or HE pedagogy. This has been done at Hartpury College, Gloucestershire. The College, an Associate Faculty of the University of the West of England (UWE), is a provider of equine care, animal science,

agricultural and land management courses, sports science, food technology and related courses. Fifty percent of the student body take degrees and post-graduate programmes and this critical mass of HE provision supports fully-HE teaching posts within the college.

The college has created a dedicated Research and Knowledge Exchange facility in order to promote a research culture and share good practice amongst colleagues. This is a well-equipped room where teachers can meet and find a quiet space to undertake scholarly activity and update their professional knowledge. The Exchange regularly publishes a journal detailing the research activities of colleagues, including

presentations given to conferences and articles accepted for publication in journals and publications of professional bodies. This facility reflects the College's commitment to creating an HE ethos and supporting staff by affording them institutional recognition for their engagement in activities which would be considered the norm within a university setting.

Research and scholarly activity taking place within an HE in FE practice context often relates to 'updating' subject knowledge, for example attending conferences or reviewing and contributing to professional journals as is done at Hartpury. Bringing HE staff together can create the additional opportunity to share and develop pedagogic knowledge which may well have

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implications for practice at local or even national level. Dr Judith Lock, who championed the Research and Knowledge Exchange initiative at Hartpury, conducted pedagogic research into using her students' comments and feedback to inform module and programme content and delivery. The results of this research were presented at the 2010 ESCalate student conference which drew attendees from across the UK.

Having a recognisable research and scholarly activity facility such as the Research and Knowledge Exchange at Hartpury provides a focal point for developing bids made to external funding opportunities and awards. The Higher Education Academy Subject Centres frequently offer small research grants to support these kinds of research activities and to facilitate dissemination through publications and events.

At Somerset College HE teachers within the Department of Engineering working within a dedicated research and development facility were able to evaluate and report on blending learning strategies employed to deliver the curriculum. This research was supported by the HELP-CETL at the University of Plymouth and ESCalate. Findings and recommendations from a series of reports and dissemination activities have transferred to other areas of the College's HE provision and partner institutions within the University of Plymouth Colleges faculty (UPC).

The Higher Education Academy itself is running an HE in FE Enhancement Programme with a series of workshops delivered within



**It is vital that staff delivering HE within mixed economy institutions are (like their university counterparts) supported in their engagement with scholarly activity and research if they are to keep up to date with developments in their disciplines and appropriate HE pedagogies.**



FECs and aimed at promoting scholarly activity and research activities to support teaching, learning and opportunities for professional development. Details can be found at <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/universitiesandcolleges/heinfe>

The workshops will, amongst other things, consider the meaning of scholarly activity and research and how to build a research ethos within an FEC, including creating and developing that vital physical space. Do come along to one of these stimulating events or possibly sow the seeds of establishing a research and scholarly activity room within your own FEC and see what grows!

Steve works as a Learning and Teaching Adviser (Technology Enhanced Learning) within the Education Enhancement unit of the University of Exeter. He is also seconded for part of his time to the Education Subject Centre (ESCalate) as an Academic Consultant with a focus on HE in FE in which he worked previously as a lecturer for 20 years.

Over the years ESCalate has supported more than a 120 funded projects. The project teams range from early academics to more experienced research practitioners. Here some of the current project teams give an interim update on how their projects are going.

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# Trainee teachers' physical and mental wellbeing

**Jan Huyton and Lalage Sanders**

Lecturers, students and workplace mentors are currently participating in a research project about the physical and emotional wellbeing of trainee teachers. The project, which is hosted by the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC) and co-funded by ESCalate, seeks to identify ways in which the wellbeing of trainee teachers can be assured at both university and school experience settings. Data will be produced via interviews and focus groups at three partner universities, the University of the West of England (UWE), Edinburgh University and UWIC. Dialogue and debate were sought across all teacher education and training communities across the UK, and an online discussion forum was facilitated in the project's early stages. Research assistant Emily

Hillier has been in dialogue with practitioners including lecturers, workplace mentors and student support specialists at all three partner universities. Emily has also been in contact with policy makers in the area of initial teacher education and training.

A review of research and literature reveals the need to hear the voice of students in the debate. Emily has set up a Facebook discussion page where trainee teachers are encouraged to contribute to debate and discussion about the student experience. Themes captured will not be used as project data, but will be used to underpin debate in student focus groups which are planned for later in the academic year. Emily explains: "Students from any university can make a contribution via the Facebook page. I am running it as student-only space to help us hear as many student comments as possible." For further information or to join the discussion please contact Emily on [ehillier@uwic.ac.uk](mailto:ehillier@uwic.ac.uk).

Anyone with a working interest in the wellbeing of trainee teachers is encouraged to email Emily as the project seeks to reflect the rich diversity of practice experience.

**Jan Huyton**  
University of Wales  
Institute, Cardiff

Jan Huyton has been a Senior Lecturer at UWIC since 2001, and is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Jan is the Cardiff School of Education PDP and Personal Tutoring Co-ordinator, and is completing a doctoral thesis at Edinburgh University which explores the personal tutoring role in UK higher education. Jan received a UWIC Extended Research Leave award in 2008, during which she conducted and disseminated the findings of a UK-wide electronic survey researching the experiences of personal tutors.

Dr Lalage Sanders is a Chartered Psychologist and an Associate Fellow with the BPS, a Chartered Scientist and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. She is Graduate Studies Coordinator for the Cardiff School of Health Sciences. She has two main areas of research, lifestyle behaviour and student engagement and wellbeing. Lalage is a part of the core team of the Mental Health in Higher Education, the Welsh branch of Learning and Teaching in Mental Health.

Jan Huyton and Lalage Sanders: University of Wales Institute, Cardiff  
Richard Eke: University of the West of England  
Zoe Williamson: University of Edinburgh

**Project page: *Student Wellbeing: Trainee teachers' physical and mental wellbeing: a study of university and school experience provision*: <http://escalate.ac.uk/6850>**

# Troublesome Encounters

**Gina Wisker and Charlotte Morris**

Our project 'Troublesome Encounters' investigates factors in the learning of masters and doctoral students in Education which impact on wellbeing. While postgraduate learning is often exciting, anxiety may accompany encounters with unfamiliar concepts, referred to as *troublesome knowledge*. For Education students, learning is likely to interlink closely with personal, academic and professional identities and emotional wellbeing. The study is exploring these links through a national survey, focus groups and semi-structured interviews to capture student experiences. Ultimately it aims to identify positive wellbeing enhancement strategies for education departments across the sector.

To date, over 200 students have responded to the survey, although as not all responses are complete, it is currently being re-distributed to maximise responses. Student respondents so far have identified that issues with academic work

such as conceptual development, problems around supervision and writing blocks can have a profound impact on their wellbeing. Conversely, when wellbeing is negatively affected, students tend to lose motivation to learn and struggle to concentrate. Personal wellbeing strategies include re-prioritising, time management and seeking support and feedback from supervisors and peers. Good communication, facilitation of peer support, clear expectations and recognising the importance of wellbeing were suggested as institutional strategies to enhance postgraduate learning. The study has noted particular challenges for part-time, mature students with work and family commitments who may struggle to access facilities and support. These insights are likely to benefit Education departments and institutions, helping to ensure that the learning experience is equitable for this group of students.

Gina Wisker: University of Brighton

Erik Meyer: University of Durham

Ray Land: University of Strathclyde

**Project page: *Student Wellbeing: Troublesome Encounters: Strategies for managing the wellbeing of Postgraduate Education students during their learning processes*: <http://escalate.ac.uk/6828>**

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Gina Wisker is Professor of higher education and contemporary literature and head of the Centre for Learning and Teaching at the University of Brighton. She recently led a National Teaching Fellowship Project on doctoral learning journeys and has published widely on supervision, doctoral learning and threshold concepts in postgraduate learning.

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Charlotte Morris is Research Officer at the Centre for Learning and Teaching, University of Brighton. She has led a project investigating the wellbeing of undergraduate students, playing a key role in the promotion and development of wellbeing at the institution. She also undertook research for the doctoral learning journeys project.

# Face-zine the Future

**Pamela Cowan**

With the current proliferation of online courses comes a whole new dimension in our learning culture in education. The tutor's role is vital in developing and maintaining an effective online learning environment. Tutors must encourage and facilitate the use of online tools and supports while enabling active participation among all students, encouraging higher order thinking skills, knowledge construction, and facilitating learning through online forums (Kreber, 2001; McLoughlin and Mynard, 2009). Tutors must be skilled at presenting a positive, professional persona within a safe and supportive place where students feel both competent and confident to participate, and feel that their contributions are valued. However tutors "cannot be expected to know intuitively how to design and deliver an effective online course" (Palloff and Pratt, 2001, p.23) nor can it be assumed that they are willing to make the change to online teaching. This research builds on the work of two key e-learning theorists, Salmon and Laurillard, and considers the interfaces between subject context, tutor expertise and participants' level of experience online. This project

focuses on teacher-educators and the skills and strategies required for success online. Phase 1 of the study has involved an online survey of existing tutors' experiences of working online and the functionality of the platforms they have found most beneficial to support online learners. The next phase will be following up specific issues raised in the survey and establishing case studies of good practice which will be presented in the final phase as an e-zine containing video clips and vignettes. A mixture of Web 2.0 tools are planned for these phases to establish an active online community of expert practitioners who can exemplify good practice and promote continued professional development of online pedagogical practices. The final dissemination event will involve a workshop of activities which will be disseminated via website links after the conference. It is anticipated that the findings from this research will contribute to an informed debate about expectations from teacher-educators in the 21st century and will result in valuable staff development materials for novice to experienced teachers and/or third level lecturers.

online tutor event

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Dr Pamela Cowan is the course co-ordinator and tutor for the Masters in E-learning at the School of Education, Queen's University Belfast and is also the course tutor for PGCE ICT/Computing and Mathematics. She organises and delivers the online training for student teachers in course design and creation using LearningNI, a regional VLE available in all schools in Northern Ireland.

Pamela Cowan: Queen's University Belfast

Eileen Winter: Queen's University Belfast

Peter Neil: University of the West of Scotland

**Project page: *Teacher Educators for the 21st Century:***

**Face-zine the Future: Moving to online teaching:**

**<http://escalate.ac.uk/6827>**

# Promoting cohesion, challenging expectations

**Peter Hick**

How well prepared are newly qualified teachers (NQTs) to respond to challenging issues of race and equality in urban schools? Anecdotal evidence suggests NQTs often do not feel adequately prepared for these challenges by their experiences of initial teacher education/training. Yet enabling teachers to deal confidently with diversity issues is crucial to a school's role in promoting community cohesion.

This project aims to explore teacher educators' understandings of race in/equality issues and how they are addressing them within their practice; and to identify ways of supporting teacher educators to further embed race equality into their work.

The research team consists of Peter Hick and Lorna Roberts at Manchester Metropolitan University with Rowena Arshad and Laura Mitchell at the University of Edinburgh. The team is interviewing a sample of teacher educators in Manchester and Edinburgh, which offer contrasting and complementary contexts: in

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Edinburgh, the school population is overwhelmingly white; whereas in Manchester, schools are more often ethnically mixed.

The project is making good progress, with interviews and policy context papers nearing completion. Regular telephone conferences have been held, together with our first team meeting in Manchester and our second planned for Edinburgh in January. Our next steps will be analysing our interview data and identifying key themes.

The findings will feed into the development of a Self Review Framework to support teacher educators in reflecting on existing practices. The Framework is intended

for use by individuals or teams as a staff development activity and will be disseminated at seminar events in Edinburgh and Manchester in April and May 2011

## **Peter Hick**

Manchester Metropolitan University

Peter Hick is Senior Lecturer in Inclusive Education at Manchester Metropolitan University and co-leader of the Centre for Social Justice in the City at MMU's Education and Social Research Institute. Previously at the Universities of Birmingham and Manchester, Peter's research interests include sociocultural approaches to understanding and promoting equity, diversity and social justice in education.

Peter Hick: Manchester Metropolitan University

Lorna Roberts: Manchester Metropolitan University

Rowena Arshad: University of Edinburgh

Laura Mitchell: University of Edinburgh

**Project page: *Teacher Educators for the 21st Century: Promoting cohesion, challenging expectations: educating the teachers of tomorrow for race equality and diversity in 21st century schools: <http://escalate.ac.uk/6915>***



# The Work of Teacher Education

Viv Ellis

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scholarship and cultures of performance management. Strong personal commitments to initial teacher education were evident in early interviews, often on the basis of autobiographical turning points and the perceived potential for impact on the profession. Early findings also suggest that the project's on-line research tool was taken up in fairly patchy fashion and the team is exploring how take-up might be improved.

The project promises to offer a very vivid picture of the work of teacher education in England and in Scotland at what is clearly going to be a critical phase for the field.

The project team have now recruited a sample of 12 teacher educators at different HE institutions in Scotland and England. Each participating teacher educator has been interviewed, has completed a work diary for a week in May this year and has taken part in an on-line research blog focused on the artefacts the teacher educators use in their day-to-day practice. Currently, the researchers are beginning to observe the teacher educators at work around the UK, combining this work-shadowing with a second interview. The team is using analytic approaches from cultural-historical activity theory,

combined with insights from narrative research, to try to understand the working practices of teacher educators, the material conditions for their work and the teacher educators' personal dispositions towards the work. The final stage of the project in February 2011 will include participants in collaborative data analysis workshops.

The project team's early data has revealed the wide variations in institutional contexts for teacher education activity, demonstrated both in contractual arrangements, salary, expectations of research and

**Viv Ellis**  
University of Oxford

Dr Viv Ellis is a University Lecturer in Educational Studies at Oxford University and the project leader for the Work of Teacher Education research.

Viv Ellis: University of Oxford  
Jane McNicholl: University of Oxford  
Anna Pendry: University of Oxford  
Jim McNally: University of Strathclyde

**Project page: *Teacher Educators for the 21st Century: The Work of Teacher Education:***  
<http://escalate.ac.uk/6866>

# Assessing professional standards

**Ruth Pilkington**

Following the launch in 2006 of the UK Professional Standards Framework (UK PSF, 2006), higher education (HE) members of staff can gain professional status via accredited taught programmes or institutional professional development frameworks.

I co-ordinate two postgraduate awards for new staff that have UK PSF accreditation, and one that targets research staff. In 2009 our institutional Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework was accredited by the Higher Education Academy.

Within our programmes, formal assignments assess professional learning and support progression towards achievement of these standards. Our assessment balances written assignments with dialogue, blogs, presentations and online activity.

The challenge for many institutions is how to assess professional learning for experienced members of staff for whom formal programmes may be unappealing. For these colleagues the assessment must encompass a

wide range of practice and subject perspectives and measure all three UK PSF Standard Descriptors. Options being used include e-portfolios, teaching portfolios; and some universities are investigating dialogic methods.

At the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) we introduced 'professional dialogue' to assess the work-based learning and development of experienced staff seeking professional status. We used UK PSF to structure a dialogic process between peers in which the applicant reflects on and is assessed against learning outcomes (Bowen Clewley, 2000). The process is based on a model by Brockbank and McGill (2007), and Boud and Falchikov (2007) which uses a phased mentoring relationship allowing mentees to gradually acquire confidence and ultimately to determine their readiness for assessment using professional dialogue. This takes place over a series of three conversations between mentor and mentee culminating in an assessed 'professional dialogue'.

In 2008, we submitted a bid to ESCalate to research the use of reflective professional dialogue to assess professional learning and nine dialogues from four institutions are currently being investigated. Evidence from transcripts and discussion between project members so far suggest dialogue provides a rigorous process for assessing and supporting learning, and is extremely effective. It is more open and flexible than static written products, and enables probing and reflection that is positive, supportive and fulfilling for participants.

Dialogic assessment is also widely used. We have encountered examples of dialogue from all educational sectors: young children self-assess and discuss progress; discussion, presentation, nested dialogue and pair work is widespread at higher levels of study. This suggests the dialogue method can be used to respond to the flexibility of professional practice-based learning, encourage celebration of good practice in teaching and learning, and provide an innovative student assessment tool.

Ruth Pilkington: University of Central Lancashire

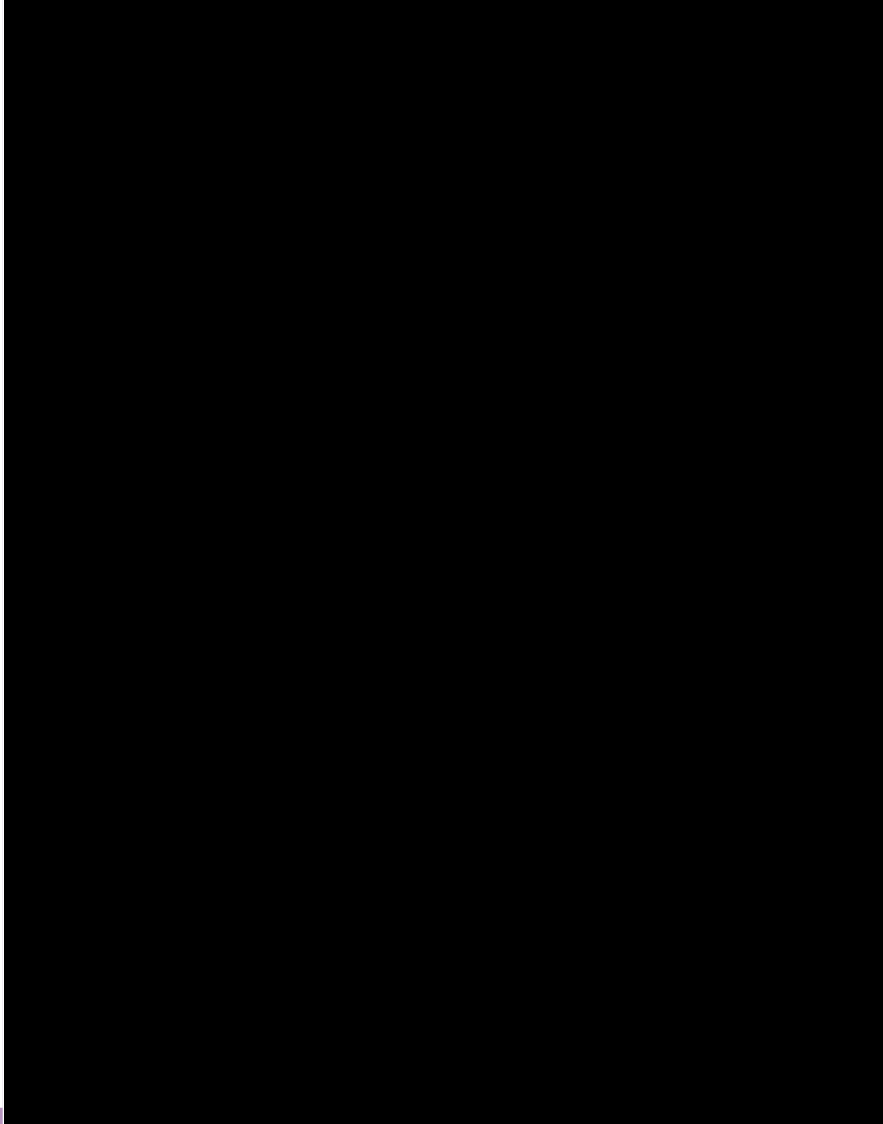
**Project page: *Research grant 2009: Using reflective dialogue to assess professional learning* <http://escalate.ac.uk/6333>**



**Evidence from transcripts and discussion between project members so far suggest dialogue provides a rigorous process for assessing and supporting learning, and is extremely effective**



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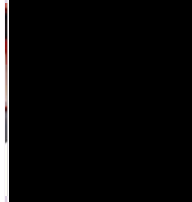
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**Ruth Pilkington**  
University of Central  
Lancashire

Ruth Pilkington is principal lecturer in Professional Development and Higher Education at the University of Central Lancashire. She leads the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, the M.Ed. (Professional Practice in Education) and Ed.D. professional awards. Ruth has published on employability and professional development. Her current research focuses on the development and assessment of professional learning for HE practitioners. She is a Fellow of SEDA (Staff and Educational Development Association).

Online resource banks for staff and students are becoming ever more sophisticated as a means of accessing relevant information. In the following articles we hear from two such service providers.

# eep – the educational evidence portal

## Andrew Morris

A helpful new tool is available for anyone interested in getting hold of research evidence for education. The *educational evidence portal* ([www.eep.ac.uk](http://www.eep.ac.uk)) helps you find evidence from a wide range of reputable sources using a single search. Praised by Baroness Estelle Morris at its launch in Social Science Week 2009 as a “critical tool for developing an evidence-using culture in education”, it has been designed for both the professional and lay user. It is being developed by organisations determined to help make research evidence more easily accessible for busy people. They are working together continuously to expand the material available and enhance the means of accessing it.

The portal offers several ways of finding documents. For people seeking a wide range of documents it searches the web areas of any combination of contributing organisations (currently 37 in number). You simply choose which sources you wish to include in the search. For more focussed results you can search the growing database of selected resources. In some specific topic areas you can get rapidly to key documents and web links through the specialised Resource Areas, developed in association with relevant organisations on topics such as *careers, work experience and*

*employment; care, welfare and behaviour and brain science.*

Various filters can be applied to speed up your search. You can focus on a specific sector, say higher education; you can choose summaries only and you can build up keywords to narrow your search. You can also select types of resources such as evidence-based guidance materials or reviews of research to suit your need. A three minute demonstration is available on-screen to explain just how to make best use of the resources available.

The way the project has developed is itself an object lesson in co-operation. Interested individuals wishing to develop the use of evidence in education came together voluntarily to plan the project and drive it forward. A Development Group comprising a dozen interested organisations and users is led and managed by CfBT Education Trust. A user group made up of teachers, policy officials, researchers and others helps steer the development work. Funding has come from a range of organisations including CfBT, DfE, TDA, Higher Education Academy and Becta. The database is being developed in conjunction with British Education Index and the original software was developed in collaboration with Microsoft as part of its *Partners in Learning* programme. The Evidence

directly to them. At the same time an international collaboration, via the EPPI-Centre, is enabling eep and other evidence systems across European countries to be compared, whilst a project coordinated by Toronto University is enabling the use of research documents downloaded from eep and other portals to be measured and compared.

In July 2010 the launch of the final report of the *Strategic Forum for Research in Education* proposed that a UK Educational Research Information Service should be developed by collaboration between eep, BEI (British Education Index) and major university libraries. The proposal is for these organisations to develop a consolidated national system for indexing research documents to replace the current haphazard approach. This could reduce duplication, wastage and incoherence by enabling research from all sources, public, private and voluntary, to be identified and presented in an easily understood common format. eep is responding enthusiastically to this proposal.

To ensure eep is suitable for a wide range of users – teachers, trainers, parents, employers, governors, community members, local authority staff and a host of others – feedback is gathered on users' experience. A 160-strong user panel feeds in ideas as do the 37+ organisations contributing material. Use of the portal is regularly monitored, both by a structured evaluation and by statistical analysis of internet usage. Evaluations show that users generally value it, though of course the coverage of content is still

incomplete. Statistical analysis suggests that the service is used by a modest but steadily growing number of users in 146 countries. With around 2,000 visitors per month (August 2010) it is currently growing at between 20% and 50% per annum.

Experience in explaining eep to interested groups shows that there is much to be learned by potential users about searching techniques, about eep's capabilities and about effective use of research evidence in general. In response to this, CfBT Education Trust has funded an Evidence Support Programme comprising live workshops to support such groups and online "mini guides" available at any time via the portal.

So whoever you are, wherever you are, why not try your hand at eep – and don't forget to let the organisers know how you find it.

See eep at [www.eep.ac.uk/](http://www.eep.ac.uk/)

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Andrew Morris specialises in the interaction of research, policy and practice. He currently works with LSIS, CfBT Education Trust, City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development and a range of other public, private and voluntary sector organisations and chairs the educational evidence portal consortium.

for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre) at the Institute of Education, University of London provides technical back-up and is leading R&D work to introduce next-generation text-mining technology to the portal. Work on developing a universal taxonomy to support browsing across all sectors of education is being led by a library specialist formerly at DfE; truly a collaborative enterprise.

Important though the portal is as a practical tool, its development can be seen as part of a wider movement towards an evidence-using culture in education. For this reason the portal project is continually moving forward and the development team reaching out to other related initiatives. Work is currently underway to simplify access to evidence by creating a single interactive page that describes the many portals and databases now available and links

# New developments to enhance community engagement through EvidenceNet

**Alex Buckley**

One of our key aims at the Higher Education Academy (HEA) is to support the use of evidence in the enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education, both at practitioner and policy level. With increasingly limited resources available across the sector, it is important that efforts to improve the student learning experience are based on robust data and well-founded theory. A key part of our work in this area is centred on EvidenceNet, the HEA's service designed to provide easy access to the relevant evidence, and to facilitate the discussion of that evidence.

In ESCalate Newsletter Issue 14 we described the launch of the service and the thinking behind it. This article offers a brief update on some recent developments.

We are keen to encourage colleagues to engage with EvidenceNet online, and so we have added new functionality to the website which allows you as users to upload your own material. Whether you want to add a resource, an event, or a network, and whether you'd like to add a single item, several items, or map an entire website, you can use the "Contribute" section of the site to add materials (see fig. 1). We have

also created an online form to allow users to submit short case studies: by filling in five brief text boxes, a case study is created that is searchable and accessible within EvidenceNet.

EvidenceNet has also supported a number of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) such as the Evaluation of Learners' Experience of E-Learning (ELE) SIG (<http://tiny.cc/hv141>) (see fig. 2) an international community of over 1000 researchers and practitioners. EvidenceNet provided funds for members of ELESIG to produce a review of the literature concerning the impact of technology on learners' experience of the transition from school to university. We have also provided support to the Engaging Students Through In-Class Technology (ESTICT) SIG (<http://tiny.cc/Ine5comn83>) enabling them to collect, systematise and disseminate good practice in the use of technology in the classroom. These SIGs are open to all, simply by registering on their Ning sites (see fig. 3). As well as engaging with SIGs, EvidenceNet has supported networks like Graduate Junction ([www.graduatejunction.net](http://www.graduatejunction.net)) helping them to develop an online library of resources to support postgraduate researchers.

As EvidenceNet develops we are now starting to get a more thorough picture of its value and the ways in which it is being used by practitioners in a range of disciplines. Its function as a signpost to relevant resources has proved a quick and easy method by which academics can get an overview of a given topic without having to conduct a lengthy literature search in multiple

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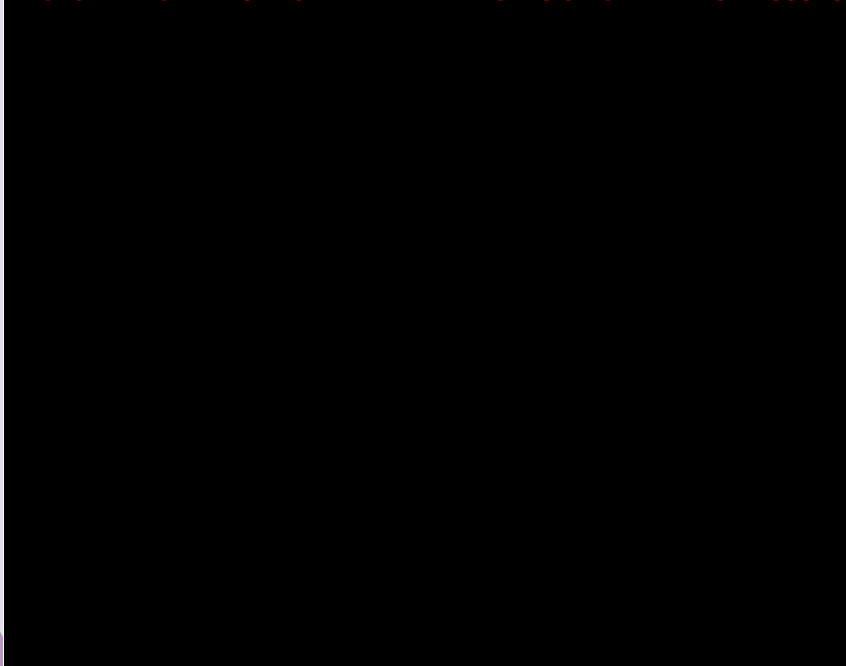


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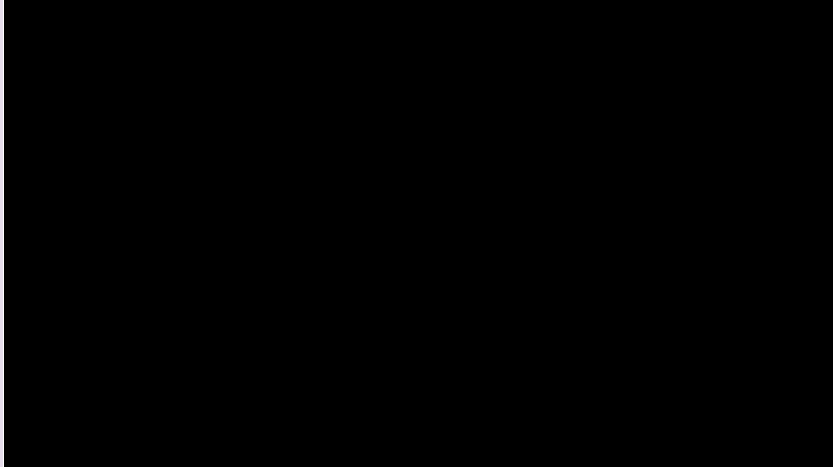


Figure 2.

reply with a link to an EvidenceNet search for the keywords ‘transition’ and ‘postgraduate’, returning over 400 results. While other list users’ responses were also useful in brokering contacts between colleagues, the speed and thoroughness of EvidenceNet provided a useful starting point for a search for information. Practitioners are also finding the “Contribute” page described above a useful way of sharing their own work – we have received numerous case studies as well as resources, events and networks that colleagues can use to inform their practice.

Over the coming year EvidenceNet will continue its journey from simply providing access to evidence, to supporting a network of communities working to access, discuss, share and implement research and evidence in HE learning and teaching. Please visit the site to learn more: [www.heacademy.ac.uk/evidencenet](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/evidencenet)

databases. It also helps them to connect to practice-based evidence much more thoroughly than traditional search methods such as Google Scholar would allow. For example, a Senior Adviser from the HEA was undertaking an official visit to an institution specialising in education studies, and was asked by the institution for examples of practice from other institutions relating to teaching-based promotions. Such a question would previously have required knowledge of specific individual contacts, specific sources of information or a potentially lengthy trawl of relevant websites. However, a search of EvidenceNet using the keyword term ‘reward

and recognition’ retrieved over one hundred directly useful, evidence-based resources (including commissioned reports, journal articles, and HEA papers) which provided a much deeper and richer understanding of the processes and issues without necessitating an extensive information-gathering process. EvidenceNet has also helped us to support colleagues on a more informal basis: for example, a post was placed on a JISCMail list from a practitioner looking for resources aimed at students starting taught Masters courses to help them make the transition to postgraduate study. The EvidenceNet team was able to

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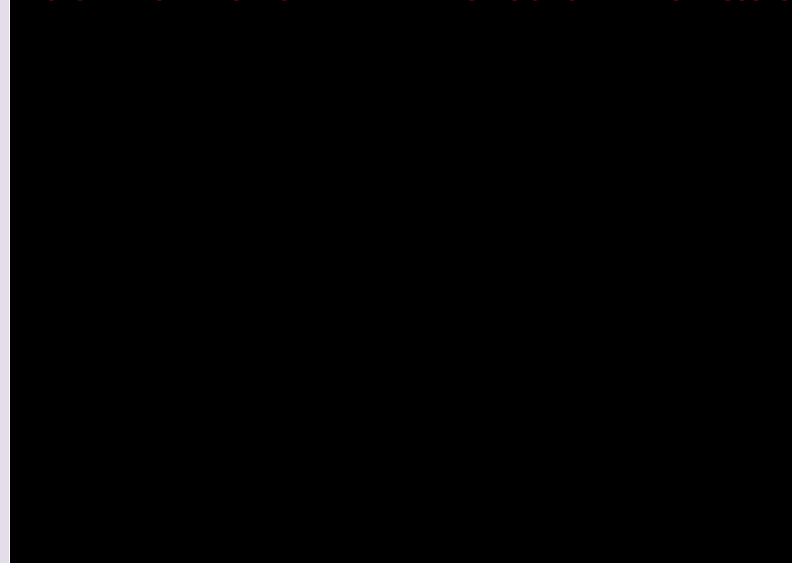
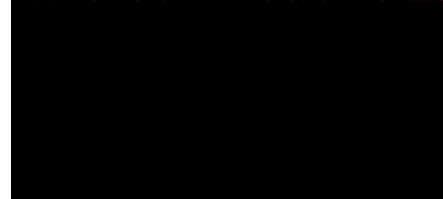


Figure 3.

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After spending several years teaching as a PhD student, Alex worked in a CETL dedicated to developing inter-disciplinary strategies for teaching applied and professional ethics. Here Alex learnt a great deal about key issues in pedagogy, and at the HEA he has had the opportunity to deepen and broaden this understanding.

Collecting like-minded people together has always been seen by us as a valuable way of exchanging and hearing about new practice. ESCalate supports many events and here we ask two event leaders to tell us their stories.

# Learning dialogues

**John Butcher**

On 13 May 2010, 120 academic colleagues from as far afield as Australia and the United States gathered in Northampton to share ideas around the importance of learning dialogues in Higher Education at the University of Northampton's third Learning and Teaching conference. The conference featured keynotes from Professor Neil Mercer (University of Cambridge) and Professor Mark Schofield (Edge Hill University), as well as 35 paper and poster presentations and 6 workshops exploring the theme of learning dialogues as a strategy to enhance the student experience.

Neil Mercer talked of three models of Higher Education (HE) learning: apprentice-scholar; lecture; student-centred; and the necessity to construct an active role for learners within these through a sociocultural perspective. Following this, Mark Schofield advocated the alignment of purpose, audience and form through learning dialogues.

Throughout the day four key issues, framed within a commitment to understanding the value of *dialogues for learning* and to *learning-focussed universities*, emerged:

## **Researching the student experience through learning dialogues**

The student voice in HE is still little heard in educational and pedagogic research. We learned about the value of working with undergraduate students as researchers on innovative pedagogic projects. For example, in the URB@N scheme (University Research Bursaries at Northampton), students use dialogue to gather authentic evidence of learning processes through peer engagement (Butcher and colleagues) and at Sheffield Hallam undergraduates are involved in skills research (Glover and colleagues). We heard about the effectiveness of Socratic techniques in mathematical education (Fradkin) and the way our understanding of learners' responses to assessment feedback can be enhanced (Lumsden et al, 2010). Also, as universities seek ever more creative ways of extending their teaching environments, it was fascinating to hear research findings which analysed students' gravitation towards certain spaces which brought in affective dimensions to learning (Powis, 2010).

John Butcher: University of Northampton

**Event page: University of Northampton Learning and Teaching Conference: <http://escalate.ac.uk/6845>**



### Virtual learning dialogues

Technology enhanced learning has galvanised opportunities for students to learn from one another, and new learning theories have developed as collaborative online learning has been investigated across a range of disciplines. We learned how dialogues through technology prompted more effective student engagement with assessment feedback (Khatri; Ringrose), and opened up opportunities for a more playful pedagogy utilising video (Gordon & Fitzgerald).

### Learning dialogues as talk in HE settings

Recognising both the power of socially constructed knowledge, and the increasingly diverse range of HE students, learning dialogues have facilitated a more egalitarian and inclusive pedagogy (peer learning, peer mentoring, peer assessment, shared knowledge construction through dialogue in inclusive settings), while raising the challenge of assessing these dialogues. We learned about the effectiveness of dialogue in tutorials (Attenburrow), including the creative use of drama (Wu) and

drawing techniques (Rogers) to complement skills development through problem solving (Adams and colleagues). Importantly, the crucial significance of dialogue with learners in the context of those universities aspiring to a more inclusive culture was highlighted, especially to identify learning needs more effectively and to implement fairer assessment systems (Butcher et al, 2010).

### Learning dialogues as a professional development tool

The accreditation of professional competence increasingly recognises the importance of communities of practice, of working and learning alongside a 'knowledgeable other' and of recording 'agreed' evidence of professional competence electronically. Lastly, we learned of the value of dialogue with colleagues to elicit evidence of the sustained impact of continuing professional development (Northcott, 2010).

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- All other citations refer to the conference above, abstracts of which can be found here: <http://www.northampton.ac.uk/learningteachingconference2010>

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Dr John Butcher is Senior Academic Development Advisor at the University of Northampton. Previous roles have included Director of Learning and Teaching at University College Falmouth and Staff Tutor in Education at the Open University.

The University of Northampton's fourth Learning and Teaching conference *Learning Global* takes place on 10th and 11th May 2011: <http://www.northampton.ac.uk/info/20278/continuing-professional-development/1062/learning-global-fourth-learning-and-teaching-conference>

# E-Learning in professional contexts

**Aileen McGuigan**

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With ESCalate's funding, we were able to host at the University of Dundee a well-attended and useful 'Sharing Ideas' symposium on 14th May 2010, the theme was e-learning in professional contexts. Some 30 attendees included ePIC members, representatives from the University's School of Medicine and from the college sector.

Julie Hughes of University of Wolverhampton was invited to speak on her interest in blogs to support learning. Her presentation, 'Building blogging learning communities: what can we learn?' was well-received and generated a lot of discussion. It was particularly useful for attendees to see and hear about Julie's experiences of blogging and e-portfolios in Pebblepad: our VLE platform at University of Dundee is Blackboard, which is very different.

Several ePIC group members gave short presentations on their 'work in progress': in 'Just two clicks' Lucy Golden presented on the importance of interaction design in online learning materials; Lynn Boyle's 'Blogging for success' was all about the potential isolation of the online distance learner and how this problem can be alleviated through group blog activity; Lynn Kelly and Sharon Jackson shared their experiences of online learning

with social work students in 'An evaluation of the student experience of engaging in collaborative inquiry through the virtual learning environment'. Lastly, Natalie Lafferty's presentation 'Beyond the garden wall: exploring the use of Wordpress to support teaching and learning' was all about the educational use of blogs in the context of University of Dundee's School of Medicine.

The symposium gave attendees a welcome opportunity to learn about each other's specific interests in the field of e-learning and to 'cross-fertilise' through some lively discussion which is still continuing, long after the event, with various attendees now 'paired up' and working together on a variety of projects.

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The ePIC Research and Scholarship Group is now in its second year of existence. It is one of a number of such groups in the University of Dundee's School of Education, Social Work and Community Education. ePIC is comprised of some 20 members of the School's teaching staff, from different disciplines, with varying experience of research and scholarship. Some of our members are 'emergent' researchers, keen to get involved in scholarly activity, others have already established themselves with a range of projects and publications.

Aileen McGuigan is ePIC (e-learning and professionalism in context) Research and Scholarship Group Convenor at the University of Dundee. Since 2006 she has been teaching on the TQ (FE) (Teaching Qualification (Further Education) programme – an online professional development programme for lecturers. Her research interest is in educational applications of Web 2.0 technology, particularly the effective use of blogs to support professional learning.

Aileen McGuigan: University of Dundee

**Project page: *Sharing Ideas: ePIC and web 2.0 tools:***  
<http://escalate.ac.uk/6931>

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## in Conversation with...

Jocelyn Wishart

### **What were you doing before you took on the role of Acting Director of ESCalate?**

I am a Senior Lecturer in Science Education at the Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol. I joined the Subject Centre team to take on an academic role mainly supporting the management of the various grant funding offered by ESCalate. My role is therefore to support practitioners teaching on HE education programmes throughout the ESCalate funded award process from making bids to writing up research reports and associated publications.

### **How did you first become involved with ESCalate?**

I was working in initial teacher education at Loughborough University at the time when the Subject Centres were set up, then part of the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN). I attended an LTSN event run at Nottingham University and, impressed, signed up as the Education departmental contact for Loughborough. Over the years I have written book reviews, applied for funding, acted as a project's 'critical friend' and worked as a bid reviewer for ESCalate.

### **Is it important to your role that you still teach?**

Yes, we are really keen to ensure Subject Centre colleagues continue to contribute to Education programmes. I am looking forward to visiting my PGCE students who are all in secondary schools teaching science at the moment. I also work with teachers and teacher educators following our Masters and Doctoral programmes. I have a particular interest in supervising students who are developing the use of technology in their teaching.

### **With your interest in further professional development for teachers, do you favour MTL or the traditional PPD?**

I think that to have a 'one size fits all' qualification is a mistake and both have their place. However, one of the most valuable learning opportunities of the more traditional Masters qualifications is the chance to share practice in an organised way and to learn from colleagues from different schools and even different education systems.

### **What do you enjoy most about working for ESCalate?**

It is extremely rewarding to work with a team of people committed to developing, enhancing and improving the practice of colleagues teaching on education and allied programmes across the UK. I have been regularly in the position of asking colleagues from new lecturers to emeritus professors to contribute to ESCalate events and publications and have been overwhelmed by their universally positive response.

### **What do you see as the most important issues for Higher Education today?**

Well, obviously there is massive uncertainty at the moment. Huge cuts to teaching budgets and to support for government funded organisations across Higher Education have recently been announced though we have yet to see the coalition government's planned White Paper. This will need to be passed by both Houses of Parliament so nothing is as yet guaranteed.

### **What strengths do you see ESCalate as having that will see it through this time of change?**

ESCalate has been supporting teaching on education programmes in Higher Education for over ten years. Working with the community, we have built up a comprehensive body of knowledge about teaching and learning in Education. ESCalate is therefore in an excellent position to broker exchanges between stakeholders and practitioners, between teachers and learners, and between colleagues in different institutions. We plan to support the education community in these challenging times by bringing people together to raise awareness of important issues, to develop and to share strategies for securing the future of education programmes. We were delighted by the response of colleagues at our recent UCET symposium where a panel of experts debated key issues relevant to each of the four regions of the UK. We are currently working with the Teacher Education Advancement Network to develop four further workshops, one relevant to each region.

### **What do you see as the biggest challenges for ESCalate in the coming months?**

We have very recently learnt that over the next twenty months the Higher Education Academy will be changing the way it supports academics at a subject level in their discipline communities. Whilst work at the subject level will remain a major and integral part of the Academy's services to institutions and the sector, it will no longer be offering grant funding to support a separate Subject Centre management structure. I will be working with the Academy, the Pro-Vice Chancellors for Teaching and Learning across a range of HEIs, our new director, our advisory board and the rest of the ESCalate team to ensure a successful way forward for ESCalate that is of clear benefit to the education community.

We will keep everyone informed of any changes to our working practices through our bulletin and on our website. Though please feel free to contact us at [heacademy-escalate@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:heacademy-escalate@bristol.ac.uk) with suggestions or for further information.

# hot topics

## £50 worth of book token prizes for each successful bid

Hot Topics are short pieces, usually an electronic offering by teachers and students.

They are a eureka! moment that makes a concise suggestion about how to solve a problem or a challenge. A Hot Topic discussion enhances teaching or learning in some simple, imaginative and creative way: something that is essentially 'of the moment', something that works for you. Suggested topics might be...

- New Technology
- Education for Sustainable Development
- Accreditation
- New ways of looking at assessment and feedback
- Student engagement

If you would like to submit a bid go to <http://escalate.ac.uk/hottopics> and read the bids that have been successful and find out how to apply

The Higher Education Academy  
Subject Centre for Education  
ESCalate

## events

### Forthcoming events

Date(s)	Details	Venue
15-26 November 2010	<b>Graduate Junction: Education Postgraduate Online Forum</b> A live online forum event exclusively for education postgraduates	Online
5 January 2011	<b>Abstract Writing and Reviewing Day at Newman University College</b> The aim of the day is to learn specifically about the requirements for the BERA and/or TEAN 2011 conferences and to write your abstract for one or both of them.	Newman University College
10 January 2011	<b>Abstract Writing and Reviewing Day at EdgeHill University</b> See above.	Edge Hill University
2 March 2011	<b>London Workshop for ESDGC in ITE</b> The first in our series of regional ESD events - 'Care and wellbeing: personal, social and global approaches to ESD/GC in ITE'	Room V115, London South Bank University
23 March 2011	<b>Liverpool Workshop for ESDGC in ITE</b> The second in our series of regional ESD workshops - 'The transformative impact of international experience on professional learning'	Liverpool Hope University
20 May 2011	<b>2nd TEAN Conference: The Important Role of Higher Education in Teacher Education</b> This conference invites colleagues to celebrate the important role that Higher Education plays in teacher education. At present there is a call for papers - deadline January 21st 2011	Manchester Conference Centre
8 June 2011	<b>UK ITE Network for Education Sustainable Development/ Global Citizenship Fourth Annual Conference</b> 'Building capacity for ESD/GC in times of change' currently a call for papers - deadline February 18th 2011	London South Bank University

For more details and to book for these and other events, which ESCalate advertises, go to:  
[www.escalate.ac.uk/events/future](http://www.escalate.ac.uk/events/future)

