

ESCalate Themed funding: Teacher Educators for the 21st Century Grant Project Interim Report

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Project Title Face-zine the Future: Moving to online teaching

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Project Start date 1 March 2010

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Face-zine the Future: Moving to online teaching

Project team

Dr Pamela Cowan, Queen's University Belfast

Dr Eileen Winter, Adjunct lecturer at QUB

Professor Peter Neil, University of West Scotland

Summary of aims and objectives

This research builds on the work of Salmon (2003) and Laurillard (2003) and it 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. The three main aims for this study are:

1. To capture and analyse current teacher-educators' experiences of moving from the traditional model of regular face-to-face classes to a model where students and tutors can participate fully and interactively online at any time during the course, and to highlight the potential 'enablers' and 'barriers' to this mode of teaching and learning;
2. To provide specific recommendations and priorities for professional development of tutors involved in all aspects of teacher education to support their transition to online teaching and in the development of communities of practice;
3. To develop an e-zine (electronic booklet) containing tried and tested strategies that can be used in the professional development of tutors as they move into the virtual world of online pedagogy.

Outline of progress to date

Phase 1 – Initial activity

In the first phase, the preliminary review of literature was completed to identify the main research questions and to provide themes for the survey. A database of participants was established and ethics approval was obtained by the partner institutions. Initial interviews were conducted with participants to inform the design of the research instruments. A wiki was established for the project to ensure easy contact and input from the evaluators. Monthly meetings were held via Skype and the literature review was shared between the team members. A face-to-face meeting was held in Belfast on 28-29 July to finalise this stage of the review of the research literature and to create the online survey hosted by the University of West Scotland (see Appendix A for the cover page). The project team tested and refined the

survey before sharing it with the Evaluators in mid-August and again in mid-September. Final adjustments were made based on their feedback before piloting with a sub-set of participants. Minor adjustments were made and the main electronic survey was administered to all invited participants in early October. A good initial response rate was achieved and reminders were sent to all invitees offering a final week for contributing to the survey. Additional people were also contacted based on recommendations from the existing sample of respondents. The closing date for the survey was four weeks later at the beginning of November. Data has been extracted from the online survey and the descriptive statistics were reviewed. More detailed analysis is currently being completed. To date work packages 1-5 in the proposal have been completed and the team are preparing for work package 6 occurring in the next few months. At present final refinements are being made to the wiki and participants will be encouraged to join it in December in preparation for Phase 2. The second phase continues from the first with preliminary discussion of the findings from the electronic survey.

Preliminary data analysis reveals a 66% response rate (46/70) of which the majority were females mainly aged 45-64 years old indicating a more mature age group being involved in this type of teaching activity. A very high proportion of the sample had a teaching qualification and had on average approximately 20 years teaching experience and 6 years experience of teaching online. Almost half of the respondents were university lecturers therefore it was not surprising to find that a large majority of the sample were teaching award-bearing courses online (Diploma, Masters, Chartered Teacher etc.) and they were most familiar with using VLEs and Skype. Levels of ICT competence and confidence were reported more often as high than medium which supports the fact that in most cases they moved to online teaching by personal choice and designed their own online course. They also reported receiving more technical support for course design than pedagogical support and similarly more training in online teaching compared to pedagogical training for online teaching. The importance and frequency of use of online facilities was reported to give an indication of the range and types of activities being embedded in online courses by these tutors. Assessment mechanisms were also investigated to determine if institutional change was keeping pace with pedagogical developments online.

The open-ended questions from the questionnaire provided qualitative evidence of tutors' perceptions of the 'enablers' and 'barriers' to online teaching and these data are also being analysed at present prior to commencing the focus group interviews in Phase 2. Additional aspects of online teaching and learning related to the original research questions for the study will also be addressed in the next phase.

Future stagesPhase 2 – Wiki work

Analysis of the open-ended responses from the questionnaires will be on-going during this phase. Focus group and/or individual interviews will be held during the next two months in which the salient findings from the electronic survey will be discussed and probed in depth. Wiki tasks will be used to generate the content for a You-Tube video(s) which will be produced based on the findings from both the electronic survey, focus group interviews and wiki collaborations. During this phase the main external evaluation will take place. A report will be produced which will highlight the main findings and will incorporate the interim findings from the external evaluation. The development of the Facebook fans area will be included in this stage in preparation for the dissemination of findings in the concluding phase.

Phase 3 – Conclusion of project

In the final stage of the project data analysis summaries will be produced and will be disseminated to participants and in staff development sessions held in the three institutions. The literature review will be finalised to take account of the most recent findings. You-Tube video and e-zine will be developed to report the findings and recommendations from the research. A conference will be held to disseminate the main findings of the project and formally launch the e-zine. The project team will disseminate the findings at national and international conferences and papers will be submitted to academic and professional journals; this will include organising ESCalate events. The finalised external evaluation will be submitted and a final report on the findings written and submitted.

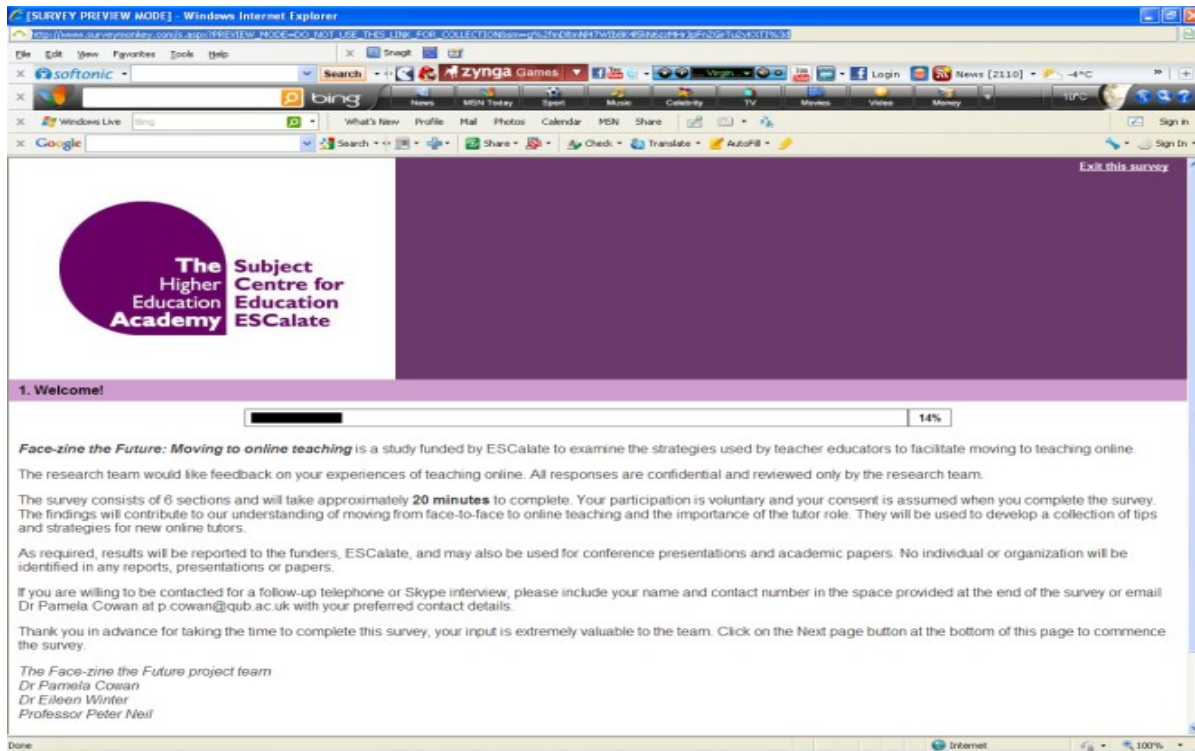
Impacts on the original project plan

The original timescale was not adhered to for Phase 1 due to internal staffing changes at the Senior Management level so Phase 1 could not commence officially until 1 July. During this interim period, the project team was working on the literature review and also completing the Ethics Review documentation. Unfortunately the delays in the early months of the study resulted in the survey not being available for distribution in May/June and so it was agreed that we would wait until the new academic year to distribute the survey to ensure a good response rate. It is hoped that the focus group interviews will be completed by January and we will be back on schedule again. Supporting the participants who are completing the wiki tasks can be achieved in parallel to the more detailed analysis and report writing stages.

Summary of expenditure to date

1 meeting in Belfast (July 2010)	£
Expenses from Scottish partner	107.70
Overnight accommodation for Scottish partner	68.09
Expenses from NI partners	96.80
TOTAL	£272.59

Appendix A



Initial screen from the survey.