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Research and Teaching – correlated or co-related?

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Abstract Template

Win-Win – Dissertation Findings Inform Masters Curriculum and Point to New Opportunities for HE Institutions in CPD

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Theme: The research-informed curriculum

Type of contribution: Showcase

Abstract:

This showcase will show how Masters dissertation research driven by a need to address CPD issues facing small institutions, both provided insights into the potential of eTeaching Practice (eTP) for a range of HE institutions, and enabled objective research into the experiential learning approach integrated into a Masters module offered by the University of Hull.

To a member of a healthcare education team in the early stages of introducing eLearning, the Masters dissertation offered an opportunity to examine what value a peer-supported, experiential approach to professional development in eTutoring might offer staff. Qualitative research involving textual analysis of student reflections and semi-structured interviews undertaken with past module participants both fitted the dissertation requirements, and also both provided a chance to specifically research the value of the eTP as an element of the curriculum.

The findings showed that eTP participants experienced significant added value from experiential learning as online teachers over and above the experience as online learners. This affirms the value of the module itself and, more broadly, indicates that professional development models involving experiential learning only as online learners, as outlined within the literature, may sell staff short. The added value of experiential professional development through eTP emerged as a vital aspect of the module and as something which may suit HE staff, especially in institutions lacking large central support departments. Opportunities to develop personal eteaching plans, negotiate individualised peer observation objectives, experience some of the technical, design and interaction activities required to develop suitable OL course content in a “safe learning environment” encouraged a deeper exploration of the participants’ “planning, delivery and reviewing” of their OL teaching skills. The added value of a peer observer focusing on the teaching rather than the subject afforded an objective view of OL teaching practice, offering the novice eTutor an opportunity to make changes to the content or restructure learning activities before they were used in a real teaching situation.

This research points to strategies to be implemented at institutional level, and supported the retention of such experiential learning within the MEd programme, and, incidentally, suggests opportunities for marketing as a standalone module.