

**Peninsula CETT**  
**Small Scale Development Project Report**



<p>Project Title:</p> <p>A Blended Learning Approach PTLLS (linked to CETT objective 1 - broadening support for trainees in the workplace)</p>
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<p>Organisation: Cornwall College School of Education and Training</p>
<p>Role in Organisation: Lead Teacher, teaching on post-compulsory ITT courses</p>
<p>Background:</p> <p>Established in 1929 to meet the training needs of local industry, Cornwall College has now grown to be the largest further and higher education college in the UK with an average of 45,000 students. Cornwall College is a key player in the devolved structure for the University for Cornwall and has over 2,500 students studying at university level. The School of Education and Training trains full and part-time post-compulsory teachers at five sites across Cornwall – Camborne, St Austell, Saltash and Stoke Climsland and at the Royal Cornwall Hospital in Truro. It also teaches professional development courses for serving teachers.</p>
<p>Project Aims:</p> <p>The project set out to explore the integration of a virtual learning environment (VLE) into the pedagogy of the PTLLS programme, both to help flexibility in programme delivery and to support trainees with the subject-specific contextualisation of the PTLLS programme. The project aimed to developed on-line materials to support VLE-based study in all areas of the PTLLS programme.</p>
<p>Description of Project as Undertaken:</p> <p>It was decided to deliver the City &amp; Guilds 7303 programme (<i>Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector</i>) using a 60:40 ratio of online and college-based content, with online content accessible via the college's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Moodle. The first instance of the course began on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2007, with the final session delivered on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2008. Twelve members of college staff from St Austell, Camborne and Falmouth Marine School campuses enrolled, with ten still enrolled by the course's end. As far as early withdrawals go, one student asked to be transferred to the classroom-based version running concurrently as he had no experience of teaching and felt insecure learning online. A second was withdrawn after "dropping off the radar"; repeated emails and telephone calls were met with silence, and after the student in question was absent from both the virtual learning environment and timetabled micro teach sessions, it was decided that he should be removed from the course.</p> <p>Interestingly, despite this course being advertised as available to existing members of teaching staff, (with the "traditional" classroom-based version recommended for those with little or no teaching experience), it later transpired that a few members of the group, though longstanding employees of Cornwall College, were employed in purely administrative roles so had no experience of teaching. This worried me as I was concerned that the art of teaching cannot be taught on a computer, but in a realistic classroom-based environment only. Proof of the course's success as far as these learners went would be assessed by way of the candidates' micro teach presentations. If they were unstructured, inexpertly delivered and just "incorrect", then the course content would not have prepared the group adequately to deliver such a presentation. As it turned out, the presentations delivered by experienced teachers matched seamlessly with those</p>

from inexperienced participants. Indeed, one or two micro teaches from inexperienced participants showed more structure and preparation than those delivered by experienced practitioners!

With their permission, participants' micro teaches were filmed, edited and saved to individual discs which were then given to each presenter. This proved a useful facility, as students could watch their presentations retrospectively and privately, thinking critically about strengths and areas to focus on in the future.

#### Outcomes/Findings:

- The course has solid enough underpinning content to be delivered as a blended learning model to members of staff with no teaching experience, despite earlier concerns. Proof of this has been gathered through observation of micro teaches and assignment content. It would appear there are no adverse effects to studying this course online without any prior teaching experience
- The second college-attendance day is in week 6. In this instance, a lengthy Christmas / New Year break between college terms stretched the length of time between the first and second college-based sessions to almost two months. At this time, several students felt themselves losing motivation and requested tutorials. It was only once these tutorials and attendance at the next college-based session had taken place that the group felt motivation levels ascend once more. As a result, this session has been brought forward so there is now only one month between the induction and first college-based session. All students will also be asked to book a mandatory tutorial between these sessions.
- That delivering a micro teach of my own during a college-based day would really help learners to understand the structure their own presentations could have. An origami-based micro teach was delivered to the group studying the traditional, class-based version of the programme in order to hone the group's lesson planning skills (they were asked to write a lesson plan retrospectively). However, it also helped them to see how to plan, structure and deliver a micro teach, so it is vital that the group with less contact have an opportunity to see the same process. To this end, the first college-based session after induction will be slightly amended to ensure that time is given to feature the same micro teach.
- Retention and achievement figures on all current versions of the 7303 are above ITT averages. This would suggest that the non-threatening nature of the course (no requirement for teaching practice, no observations, no exams, no academic writing) and the time frame of 12 weeks make this, on a psychological level at any case, an "easy" course to work through.

- Students' mid and end of course evaluation comments are very positive, with results as displayed (data based on 10 responses):

	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
Organisation and administration	9	1	0	0	0
Venue	9	1	0	0	0
Content	8	2	0	0	0
Methods of delivery	8	1	1	0	0
Quality of delivery	8	2	0	0	0
Interaction within the group	9	1	0	0	0
Resources	10	0	0	0	0
Impact upon your teaching	9	1	0	0	0

- Of the ten students who have completed an end of course questionnaire, four of them have cited the most enjoyable feature of the course as being the flexibility of study and ability to study in one's own time, with three stating that they had enjoyed the group interaction and one saying that the most useful part of the course had been watching the micro teach sessions.
- Of the seven students who completed mid-course evaluations, six said that they would recommend the course to other new or unqualified teachers, with the remaining participant saying that they would recommend the 7303, but advise possible candidates to work through the traditional, classroom based version.
- Suggestions for improvement from four members of the group were that there were fewer weeks between the induction session and the next college-based session. As previously mentioned, steps have already been taken to address this and ensure motivation levels are.
- Students' summative comments are as follows:

*"The course has had a huge effect on practice – I will think about the way I deliver and use different methods."*

*"I now know how to deal with difficult behaviour."*

*"Can look a bit daunting online, so needs commitment. It may be an idea to advise students about the commitment needed."*

*"...also the importance of using different teaching methods rather than using a preferred teaching method."*

*"...it has given me a knowledge and understanding of people's (sic) different learning needs and styles."*

*"A better understanding of how lessons should run and be constructed."*

*"It has given me more of an insight to other / better teaching methods and styles."*

*"This course will have a positive effect on my own teaching."*

- I set up study groups at the induction session, but this proved to be a wasted opportunity of sorts. Groups of 3-4 students were set up according to their location, and with

members' permission, issued contact details (this has worked successfully in my other courses delivered with a blended learning slant). I assumed that these self-contained groups would give participants the opportunity to meet regularly. However, in this instance these groups simply never met up. It may be an idea to introduce a couple of optional sessions in the next version of the course where groups can meet up and work on / discuss assignments. I can be on hand in a less formal role, making work space and computers available for any student wishing to use them, holding tutorials and offering assignment guidance / advice as and when necessary.

#### Discussion:

Conversations with City & Guilds and Cornwall College's allocated External Verifier have proved positive. Representatives from City & Guilds and the EV herself have all examined the course content on Moodle and reactions and comments have, to date, been wholly positive.

#### Recommendations for Peninsula CETT:

- Install a wifi network that does NOT require a Cornwall College computer to access. The limited access the wireless network allows (whereby only Cornwall College- dedicated laptops can access the internet wirelessly,) makes the installation of a wireless network virtually oxymoronic:

*"Once colleges have embraced the notion that wireless networks are cheaper, easier to maintain (and) more flexible...then we will see a shift in how laptops, PDAs and tablet PCs are used in the classroom."*

(Whalley, Welch and Williamson, p43)

- Look into the flexibility of course delivery, so that the accreditation can be delivered in a (suggested) block week / six concurrent Saturdays / over the course of a half term break.
- Look at the possibility of using e-portfolios:

*"E-portfolios can promote imaginative work from pupils because they encourage the use of a variety of media which can help pupils express their ideas in imaginative ways."*

(Gillespie, Boulton et al, p51)

- Invest in a selection of portable learning devices (camcorder, MP3 players, PDA, PSP, etc) and record pod casts, film the tutor's (not candidates') micro teach session as a point of reference and upload to Moodle. Again, the inclusion of a wireless network would be a plausible suggestion.
- Make this a mandatory course for all new teaching staff (as part of the induction process?)
- Simply roll this provision to a broader catchment area. At the moment this course has only been available to in-house teaching staff without a qualification, based at Cornwall College. By unknowingly allowing staff with no teaching experience on to the course and seeing how they have picked up the skills needed to start delivering learning despite this suggests to me that the course has a solid enough premise to be available to anyone interested in teaching.
- Organise a dissemination conference relating to successes and failings of Blended Learning within Initial Teacher Training.
- Explore blended delivery of a standalone CTLLS (Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector) programme.
- Explore blended delivery of full and part time DTLLS (Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector) programme.

List of References:

Gillespie H, Boulton H, Hramiak AJ and Williamson R, (2007), *“Learning and Teaching with Virtual Learning Environments”*, Learning Matters, Exeter

Whalley J, Welch T and Williamson, L, (2008), *“E-Learning in FE”*, Continuum, Hampshire

Acknowledgements:

Without students’ honest and detailed responses to mid and end of course evaluations, this report would have been biased at best and inaccurate at worst.

City & Guilds and the EV for this course have, as mentioned, been instrumental in ensuring that the course covers all syllabus-based content and in giving the college permission to run the course using online methodology.