

## Teachers do it for themselves - together: WMCETT's Teacher Educator initiative

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### Introduction

The aim of the West Midlands Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (WMCETT) Teacher Educator Initiative (TEI) was to enable teacher educators to identify a particular area of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and work together to address it in their teams. This was in recognition of the fact that this kind of personal and professional team-based development activity is hard to come by – especially for this group.

WMCETT accepted project proposals from ten colleges in the partnership which met one of the following criteria:  
The activity:

- enhanced their team's collective knowledge of the theories and principles of teacher education or
- developed understanding and experience in a particular aspect of the Lifelong Learning Sector or
- supported the development of a particular aspect of delivery.

Participants were asked to submit interim and final reports and present their projects at a showcase event.

### The projects

The projects reflected three main themes: e-learning, minimum core and mentoring.

The e-learning projects generated a lot of enthusiasm and learning. They focused on how to use different types of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) more effectively and included training for teams in Blackboard, Moodle, Web 2.0, interactive whiteboards and Pebblepad including REfLECT. This has had an impact on practice. Teacher Educators are now using the VLE more creatively and encouraging their learners to use technology in different ways.

Teams explored e-learning pedagogy in different ways. One chose a specialist theoretical input on e-learning pedagogy while others took an action research approach. This included website development which was trialled and evaluated by trainees. These activities tended to stimulate discussion around e-learning pedagogy within the teacher training programme itself, and in one instance the team cascaded their learning to the whole organisation.

One college set up an experimental classroom to trial mobile technology including a Busby camcorder, a Sony Reader and an i-Pod. Trainees and staff were invited to use the resources and to share their experiences of their pedagogical value to learners. This resulted in the Sony Reader being used by the Supported Learning team and the i-Pod being used to incorporate film and images into sessions. The Busby camcorder was a hit! Staff and trainees now use it to film students at work, record achievements and to film themselves teaching. Its use in teaching observations has improved reflection and self-evaluation.

Two colleges developed projects on mentoring. Teacher educators at one college undertook a postgraduate Certificate in Mentoring and used this to improve their practice with 'hard-to-reach' mentors. The second college set up a virtual community of practice linking the teacher educators and subject/specialist mentors inside and outside the college.

The final project focused on the advice given to trainees on the workforce reforms, initial assessment and the minimum core.

### Showcase Event



Representatives from fourteen colleges took part in the very successful Showcase Event to share the projects across the WMCETT partnership.

Brief project presentations in small discussion groups raised wider issues about curriculum and programme development, such as how to make the curriculum more flexible through unitisation and funding for this; differences in awarding bodies; how to introduce reflective thinking into programme induction and support for learners changing professions into teaching.

*"Fascinating, provoking much thought and discussion"*

The advantage of integrating learning technologies and e-learning strategies into programmes was debated, as was the question of how far Teacher Educators needed to be fully knowledgeable about new technologies or to integrate specialists

into their teams. The college roles of IT specialists - whether they 'fixed faults' or supported the teaching and learning process has a big impact on programmes. Overall it *"promoted some excellent discussion from interesting presentations"*.

Subject mentoring raised a number of issues about the relationship between tutors and mentors, especially when the mentors were external to the college. Key areas for discussion included: how mentors were chosen, their training and support and how they communicate with tutors.

The event was well received and very successful. Delegates commented on the positive value of networking and supportive exchange between teacher educators.

*"A very useful and exciting ideas day"*

