



## **REAP Project – Case Study**

### **B.Ed. 1<sup>st</sup> year – Module ED111 (Learners & Learning)**

#### **Introduction**

The B.Ed.(Honours) in Primary Education is offered in the Department of Childhood and Primary Studies on the Jordanhill Campus of Strathclyde University. It has an annual intake of around 170 students and is offered over a 4 year period. There is a substantial input from the Department of Educational and Professional Studies throughout the four years of the course.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> year of the course the Educational Studies component is the module ‘Learners & Learning’ – ED111. This is designed to help students develop understandings of the processes of learning and also to help them develop insights and sensitivity to the needs of learners. Students are expected to be able to demonstrate their understanding of various explanations of learning and development processes and they are required to be able to use well recognised psychological and sociological literature as a basis for developing their own thinking and practice.

#### **Current Assessment Practice**

Up to this point assessment of the module has comprised three main elements

- 1) Formative informal assessment by tutors of the extent of engagement of students in specific tasks associated with each lecture input. This is an integral part of the process where tasks are discussed in seminar groups every second week. It is deliberately low key and very informal and is intended to provide support and guidance to students as they begin to develop insights into the module content along with appropriate critical skills.
- 2) Formative informal assessment by tutors based on a scrutiny of student portfolios at the end of the first Semester. This allows tutors to have the opportunity to identify students who may not be engaging fully with the content or who may be developing study difficulties. Individual tutors are responsible for following through with any cases where they feel there might be any cause for concern regarding student progress.
- 3) Summative assessment using a formal examination. This exam is in two parts involving a 50 item Multiple Choice Array and a ‘seen’ section requiring analysis of a previously circulated article where students respond to a known set of specific analytical questions.



### **Difficulties Identified from Current Practice**

The current programme has proven to be effective since the launch of the current course. It has received favourable student evaluation and both the assessment regime and practice have proven acceptable to external examiners. Despite this apparent success, the module delivery team have now identified a number of issues where they see possibilities for future development.

- 1) Tasks associated with lectures do not always relate clearly to what is expected from students at the final summative assessment stage. The tutor team is currently being invited to consider how these tasks could be reformulated to address this. It is further invited to consider the sequencing and frequency of tasks to determine the most effective way to help students develop the skills and insights identified as module outcomes.
- 2) The informal formative assessment at the end of the first Semester is uneven in its effectiveness. It depends very much on the interpretation of individual tutors and students are unsure about how any feedback relates to the aims or intended outcomes of the module.

### **REAP Proposal**

It is to address the second of the above difficulties that the proposal is made to utilise 'Pebblepad' technology and software. Students will be expected to maintain their own personal records and reflections as sets of assets brought together on Pebblepad. They will be encouraged to utilise assets generated by them for other parts of the course to contribute to any aggregation and sharing of assets relating to the specific seminar tasks set.

It is proposed that for the student cohort entering the course in September 2006 the second aspect of the full assessment regime should involve the utilisation of 'Pebblepad' as an integral part of the student learning process. Although the tutor team is still considering the full details of the application of the technology in the context of the module it has been possible to identify a number of general principles which will guide the implementation process.

- 1) Seminar groups, as at present, will meet on what is roughly a 2 weekly basis. This will however vary to take account of the pattern of lectures and course content. Although reading will continue to be associated with each lecture, there could be more specific tasks designed to provide an appropriate focus for peer and self assessment activities. These tasks are likely to become more demanding as the module progresses to the point where greater depth of insights can be expected.



- 2) Each student in a small sub group usually of 4 could be expected to complete the task prior to the seminar meeting and to generate whatever aggregation of assets they think might be appropriate and helpful in doing this. Students will be encouraged to be wide ranging in bringing together assets and insights from different sources rather than being forced into a very prescriptive approach.
- 3) Students could then be expected to share what they have generated with the other 3 members of their sub group prior to the seminar. Groups could also be provided with assistance in peer assessing the work of the other three members of the group. This might be in many different forms depending on the nature of the topic involved, the depth of analysis appropriate at the particular stage of the module and on individual tutor preferences. Examples could include anything from skeleton frameworks through to more fleshed out specimen responses. Again there is scope for considerable variation in responses and students will be encouraged to be eclectic in their approach. The key consideration will however always be to provide sufficient challenge to encourage students to move forward with sufficient information and encouragement to enable them both to assess their own individual efforts and to make effective peer assessment of the work of the other members of their group.
- 4) Given the material which could be generated by students along with the material provided the nature of the seminar meetings is then likely to be slightly different from what has been normal practice in the past. Initially a seminar meeting might for example involve members of each sub group sharing in the peer assessment process. Tutors would be able to take part in any small group discussions but are envisaged as having a facilitative rather than directive role. The outcome of such a process could then be that one sub group might be able to present, on a very informal basis, a summary of findings and responses to the task in such a way that the whole sub group is identified as owning that presentation and not any individual student. With five sub groups of 4 students in an average seminar group it would be possible through the academic year to offer each sub group the opportunity to contribute in this way possibly twice during the seminar programme.



## **Anticipated Outcomes**

There are several possible benefits anticipated as a result of implementing a version of the above proposal.

- 1) Students are given much greater responsibility for developing their own learning throughout the module. The approach is intended to encourage both the development of personal academic enquiry skills and also the development of collaborative working skills.
- 2) Peer and self assessment processes are firmly embedded in the module delivery through the mechanism of tasks and seminars supported by the application of 'Pebblepad' technology.
- 3) Students should find it easier to reflect across different course components through the use of 'Pebblepad' technology. This should make easier the development of more integrated understandings drawing on the wider range of work from different modules.
- 4) Students will be able to use 'Pebblepad' technology to make possible effective collaborative learning even where they have limited time together in the same physical location.
- 5) Students should be better able to recognise how different professional insights drawn from across the range of modules undertaken relate to the broader context of their professional development and practice.
- 6) Tutor support in seminar meetings is encouraged to become far more facilitative of wider ranging enquiry as a result of the increased scope which should exist for development of differing insights on tasks and readings.
- 7) An existing tutor assessment element is removed, reducing the administrative burden on academic staff involved.
- 8) Fuller student engagement with the module programme and the respecified tasks should lead to an improvement in the quality of insights and understanding which students are able to demonstrate in the final summative assessment exercise.



## **Evaluation**

Evaluation data on the existing module provision will be retained in order to provide a baseline from which the degree of progress achieved can be measured. There is scope for further development both of the ways in which the module delivery programme is operated and the ways in which its performance is evaluated. The module delivery team will continue to consider possible future refinements which may become necessary in order to achieve the anticipated outcomes more effectively on the basis of information derived from further evaluations.

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