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# Crynoldebau / abstracts

‘Begin where the Learner is’

(but where is the learner?). Creating online learning opportunities in the Master’s in Educational Practice.

Andrew James Davies

Friedrich Froebel famously urged the educator to ‘begin where the learner is’ (cited in Heritage and Bailey, 2006), a quotation which has been interpreted as a ‘figurative’ challenge for the teacher to empathise and ‘inhabit’ their learner’s range of competence, in order to expand it. Yet, new models of distance, online and blended learning are increasingly prompting us to think more literally about ‘where the learner is’ when they engage in learning, and to consider how location and distance affect the potential for effective transmission, meaningful interaction and scaffolding between the learner and teacher. This paper reports on the development and delivery of a blended learning Master’s degree in Educational Practice open to all eligible newly-qualified teachers in Wales. This collaborative project between SELL at Aberystwyth University, Cardiff University, the Institute of Education at UCL and Bangor University, was commissioned by the Welsh Government in 2012, and will run in its current form until 2017.

This presentation will reflect on the experience of developing and delivering this blended degree scheme to over 1,000 new teachers in Wales. It will consider a range of issues, including:

 - Engaging busy professionals in online learning which is accessible and manageable;

- Embedding the general principles of instructional design (Gagne, *et al.* 2004) into development, and ensuring that online content provides opportunities for interactivity, multimodality and consolidation through practice;

- Ensuring that online academic content is structurally legible, relevant and succeeds in providing practitioners with salient and authentic insights relevant to practice;

- Ensuring meaningful student engagement in asynchronous seminars on discussion boards;

It will also reflect on other challenges posed by distance, such as the alignment of expectations and procedures at four HEIs, and over time the development of a cohesive ‘community of practice’ (Wenger, 1998).