

RESEARCH TOPIC

Conceptualising Curriculum Change: Structuring the Final Year Learning Experience on a Professionally-orientated Degree Programme in Education Studies

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Within Higher Education there is a growing expectation that graduates will enjoy smooth transitions into practice or further study and thus it is important to understand how higher education students' experiences in university should be best organised and integrated to realise these purposes. This action research study investigated the impact of the curriculum design of the final year on student experience, engagement and progression routes post-graduation in a new four year professionally-orientated degree for students in a BSc in Education Studies in an Irish education institution.

This study involved 26 lecturers and 25 recent graduates from the programme. Students were required to undertake a final year (capstone project) dissertation and an internship (involving the development of an ePortfolio to demonstrate and reflect on their journey of learning and to make connections with learning across

the final year). Data was collected by means of an online student survey, followed by a focus group interview with self-selecting student participants as well as a focus group interview with the programme development team.

The focus of this poster is on presenting the findings in terms of student experience of the balance between the internship and the dissertation as a preparation for their professional pathway; it also explores the lecturer experience as curriculum designers and facilitators.

Ultimately the intention of the research team is to improve the curriculum design process and outcome for the programme and to contribute to the knowledge base on the highlights and challenges of designing and delivering professionally-orientated degrees in to the future.



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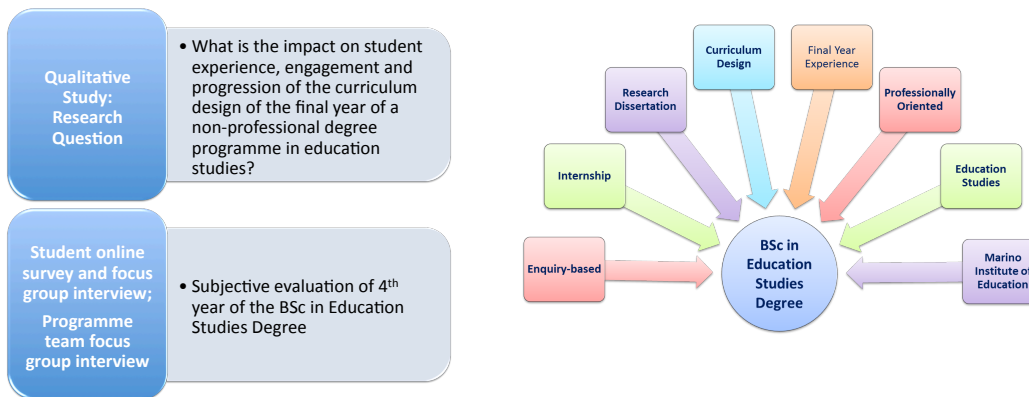
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CONCEPTUALISING CURRICULUM CHANGE:

Structuring the Final Year Learning Experience on a Professionally-orientated Degree Programme in Education

Studies

Overview of the study



INSTITIÚID OIDEACHAIS
★
MARINO
★
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

An Associated College of
Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin

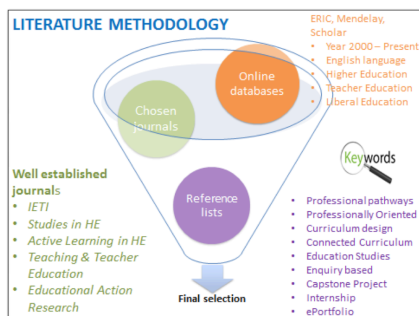
The research team

Dr Julie Uí Choistealbha

Dr Róisín Donnelly

Dr Marian Fitzmaurice

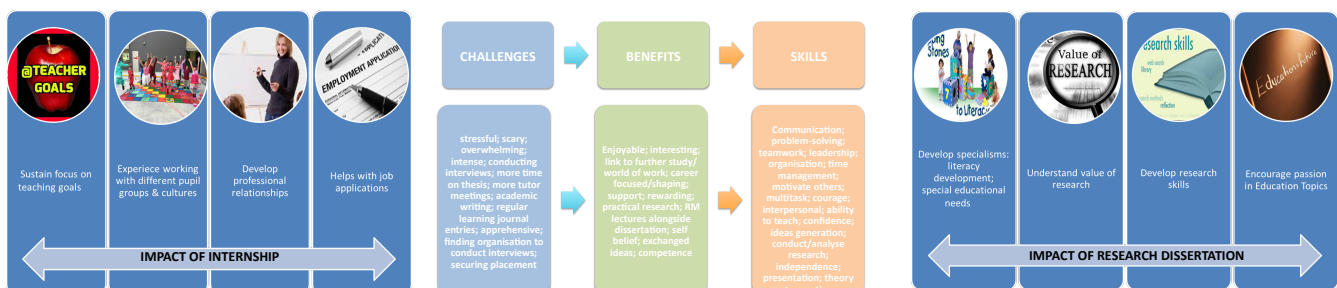
Indicative Literature



Timeline to date

Research Design Stages	Date
Acquire Graduate contact details	November 2015
Review of literature	April 2016
Develop student survey in SurveyMonkey	November 2015
Ethics: Review information letter & participant consent form	Early January 2016
Develop focus group questions for students and staff	January 2016
Student survey to be sent out	By 15/1/16
Conduct two focus group interviews (Students & Staff)	Mid March 2016
Transcribe interviews	End March 2016
Data analysis & interpretation	Mid April 2016
Poster & Presentation for IICE Conference Dublin	April 25-28, 2016
http://www.iicedu.org/	

Initial Findings: Students



Initial Findings: Staff

- Collaboration was central in design and delivery of modules
- Curriculum design supported students to become more independent learners
- Students developed their workplace skills and could talk the language of recruitment
- Students require a significant piece of work experience as part of the degree programme
- There was a lesser focus on innovation first time round but this year the eportfolio has greatly improved the level of innovative thinking
- Research, Internship and Skills modules worked but a module to connect the learning from other years is required
 - Well-grounded in research in fourth year
 - Connection between the theory and the practice
 - Change in the students after internship
 - Isolated [from the rest of the programme]

Mid-point reflections

- How well did the final year prepare students for the path chosen by each on completion of the degree?
- What were the key variables in the programme design and implementation process for the final year from the staff perspective?
- How did the student experience of the final year compare with the intentions of the programme design team?
- After synthesising different perspectives from students and staff on the curriculum design of the final year of the BSc in Education Studies, how is the programme going to be improved?

Next steps

Consolidate findings

Implement recommendations

Continue to innovate

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Researcher Profile

Dr Julie Uí Choistealbha is a Lecturer in Education in Marino Institute of Education (an associated college of Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin, Ireland). Julie is Coordinator of the BSc in Education Studies programme and also works in the School Placement Department. She previously worked as a primary school teacher, an induction coordinator for newly qualified teachers and as an Irish language teacher. Julie teaches on the Advanced School Placement module for B.Ed and PME students, runs a second language teaching and learning specialism course on the Education Studies programme as well working with the Education Studies group in advance of work placement and internship. She is also a dissertation supervisor for students on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Julie's research interests include work-based learning for undergraduate and postgraduate

Dr Marian Fitzmaurice was awarded a Doctorate in Education in 2010 and her thesis was a narrative study of the teaching experiences of early career academics. She has worked for a number of institutions as a lecturer, taught on Masters programmes in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and supported students through the challenges of completing their qualitative research dissertations. She has a long standing interest in teaching and learning in higher education, academic writing and curriculum design. Marian has presented at many workshops and seminars

Dr Roisin Donnelly joined the programme team of the BSc in Education Studies in 2015 as a Lecturer in Education in Marino Institute of Education (an associated college of Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin, Ireland). Specifically she teaches on the Studying Teaching and Research Methods modules. She also supports students on the former module in ePortfolio development. Roisin is also Programme Chair and Co-ordinator of the DIT MSc Applied eLearning (winner of the IELE award for best blended learning programme 2012 & Shortlisted for PG Course of the Year 2014), where she also has teaching and examining responsibilities. Additionally, she is module tutor and assessor on a range of core and elective modules on the Postgraduate Diploma in Third Level Learning & Teaching and the MA in Higher Education. She has supervised 28 MSc and MA students to successful completion and is currently co-supervising a PhD student in Computing; in 2014, she completed a 'Licence to Supervise at

students of education (initial teacher education and education studies), the Irish language and the role attitudes, perceptions and motivation play in the teaching and learning processes. Following an autoethnographical study of her research interests, as presented at the London International Conference on Education in November 2015, her current research focuses on the assessment of work-based learning in the final year of undergraduate education degrees, the use of ePortfolios in competency-based assessment and the final year curriculum design of a professionally-orientated degree. Julie is a Trinity College Research Fellow in the School of Education's Research in School Education (RISE) research group and sits on the steering committee of the Post Primary Languages Initiative.

nationally and internationally in the areas of teaching and learning and curriculum design in higher education settings and has a range of publications reflecting her research interests. She is active in several professional organisations and an invited reviewer on a number of international journals. She has recently completed a project in Trinity College on academic writing and plagiarism and developed on-line resources for students. Marian is currently lecturing on the BSc in Education Studies in Marino Institute of Education.

Doctoral Level' Course. She recently completed a SEDA fellowship, is a fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy since 2003, is founder and co-editor of the Irish Journal of Academic Practice (IJAP), co-founder and joint co-ordinator of the annual Graduate Student Conference, and a former member of the Steering Committee of the Irish PBL network (Facilitate). She co-organised the 2016 ePortfolios in Ireland: What Now, Where Next? Conference as part of funding from The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (Ireland) <https://eportfoliohub.wordpress.com/>. She has guest lectured on international online courses in Australia, Finland and the UK, and delivers consultancies and workshops nationally on a variety of topics in learning and teaching; has a range of publications to date [3 edited books, 25 book chapters, 40 peer reviewed journal publications and 48 reviewed conference presentations] reflecting her specialist teaching and research interests.