

# **Educating the new generation of teachers as constructivist practitioners – But will the model fit a distance mode of delivery?**

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## **Aims of this presentation**

- To explain why we have to move from a traditional teacher-training model to a more radical constructivist approach.
- To discuss how the new model is managed to achieve the optimal exposure to the programme.
- To illustrate how students' engagement with one module (Learning Theory) of the programme contribute to constructivist development.
- To illustrate the challenges DE is to experience with the implementation of a constructivist TE model.

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## Statement or claim

- We have seen very few changes to the education and teacher training landscapes the past 40 years. Paradigmatic changes remain limited (e.g. shift from teaching to learning). Our understanding of the purpose of education will have to change if we want our learners to be competitive and face up to future challenges.

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## Innovation and Change

- Transformation and change starts from within, but radical and fundamental changes have to be politically and systemically supported and driven at macro level. Furthermore, curriculum change remains futile unless accompanied by innovative classroom practices. The heart of the problem lies in the way we design our learning tasks.

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## Aim with the PGCE programme

- To graduate educators that will facilitate learning to optimise the potential of learners by creating powerful learning environments innovatively and constructively.

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## Traditional PRESET Models

- Professional development confined to theoretical frameworks supporting selected philosophies – little opportunity to change
- Teaching practice influenced by supportive and conforming approaches
- Pedagogy unchallenged and unquestioned
- Lack in creative and innovative challenges

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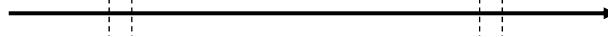
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## Traditional Contact-based PRESET

6 weeks teaching practice

6 weeks teaching practice



## Traditional Distance Education PRESET

Staff-student intervention accessible throughout the year



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## Changing perceptions of the curriculum of knowledge

- Focus on real-life experiences - authentic
- Eclectic curriculum practices
- Move away from the 'Tyler rationale' and power
- Transmission of information of little value
- Information gains fitting constructivist approaches
- New foci on the importance of the 'inner' curriculum
- Holistic approaches versus fragmentation

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## Foundations of the Practice-Theory TE model

- Teaching reality provides learning experiences
- Practical exposure (t) supplemented by theoretical support (T)
- Professional development monitored over time – limited testing and assessment
- Concept mapping evidential for growth and knowledge construction .
- Focus on learning facilitation with limited conventional ‘teaching’

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## Foundations of the Practice-Theory TE model (continued)

- Learning task design (lesson planning) based on a prescriptive learning facilitation model
- Action research (action learning) used as practice to build on experience
- Close to 60% of programme located in selected schools
- Close to 40% of student teacher’s time is spent with teacher educators

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## Why a school-based teacher training model based on the practice-theory rationale?

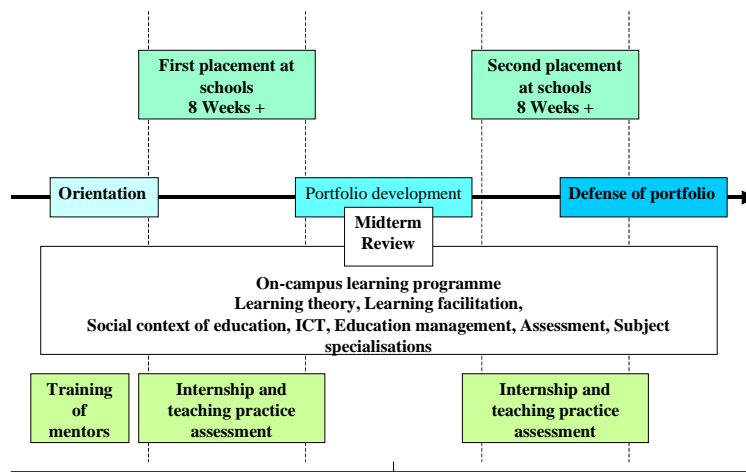
- Changing face of education globally with a focus on learning and not on teaching
- Education for diversity and education for change
- New demands facing educators, learners and schools
- Needing to cope with limited resources in a knowledge-driven society

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### Activities of the PGCE practice-theory model



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**What new changes did the teacher-training programme see?**

- **An integrated curriculum.**
- **The development and defense of a professional portfolio.**
- **An 'open' timetable with broader consultation.**
- **No formal tests and examinations are written.**

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**What new changes did the teacher-training programme see? (continued)**

- **Identify highly skilled mentors to supervise student teachers at participating schools.**
- **Students are placed at schools close to 60% of the academic year.**
- **Agreement with participating schools.**
- **Consensus in an agreed upon teaching philosophy.**

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## What new changes did the teacher-training programme see? (Continued)

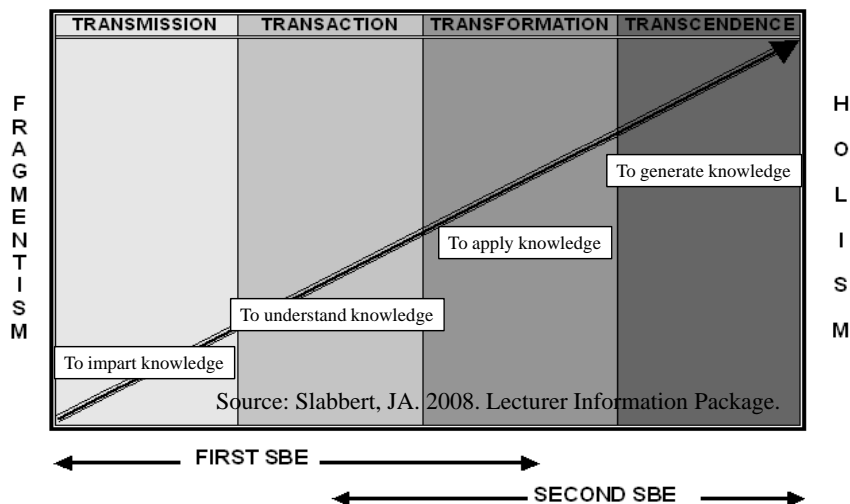
- Limited student intake.
- Restricted fields of specialisation.
- Focus falls on the authenticity (real-life) of a powerful learning environment.
- Real-life problems steer learning task design (lesson design).

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### PROGRESS THROUGH FOUR EDUCATION PARADIGMS



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## Examples of modules in the PGCE FET-Phase programme

- Foundational modules
  - Global perspectives in Education
  - Foundations of Education

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- Core modules
  - Learning Theories
  - Facilitating Learning
  - Assessment
  - ICTs
  - Professional ethics and Law
  - Social Context of Education
  - Professional Portfolio

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- Electives
  - Methodologies (Biology, English, Physical Science, Mathematics)

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## How did the students do Action Research to collect their data?

- Observing the mentors
- Interviewing the mentors
  - Using semi-structured interviews
  - Using checklists
  - Using questionnaires
  - Talking to them informally

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## Next phase of the programme

- Constructing a concept map aligning learning theory with learning task design

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## Why concept maps?

**A *concept map*** is a creative (colourful, playful, animated) construction of the relationships between a set of (selected) concepts indicating the nature, distance, and relatedness of the relationships between the concepts. A self-constructed concept map reveals a learner's understanding of (...the integrated nature of phenomena)

Source: Slabbert, JA. 2008. Lecturer Information Package.

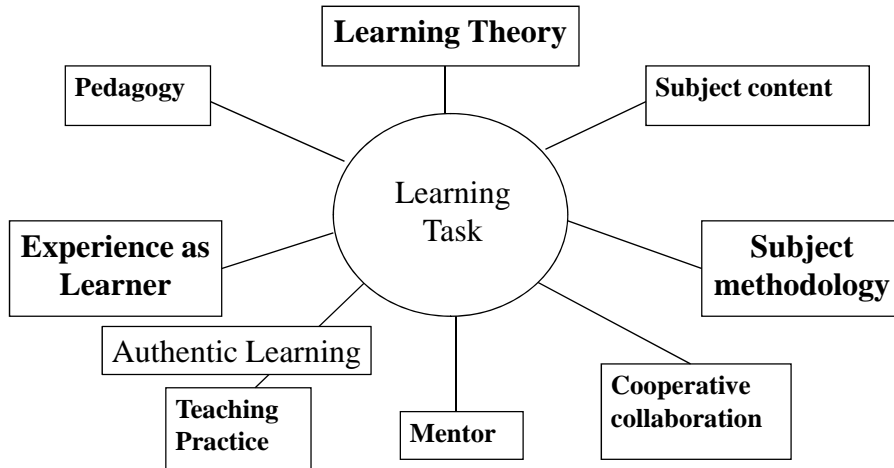
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**Sources of information and interactions necessary for the development of Learning Tasks (LTD)**

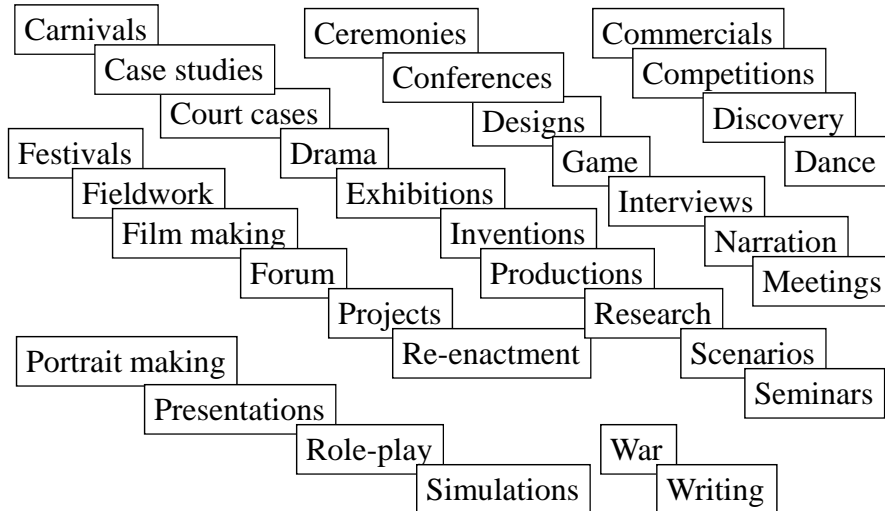


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**What strategies contribute to cognitive and skills development?**



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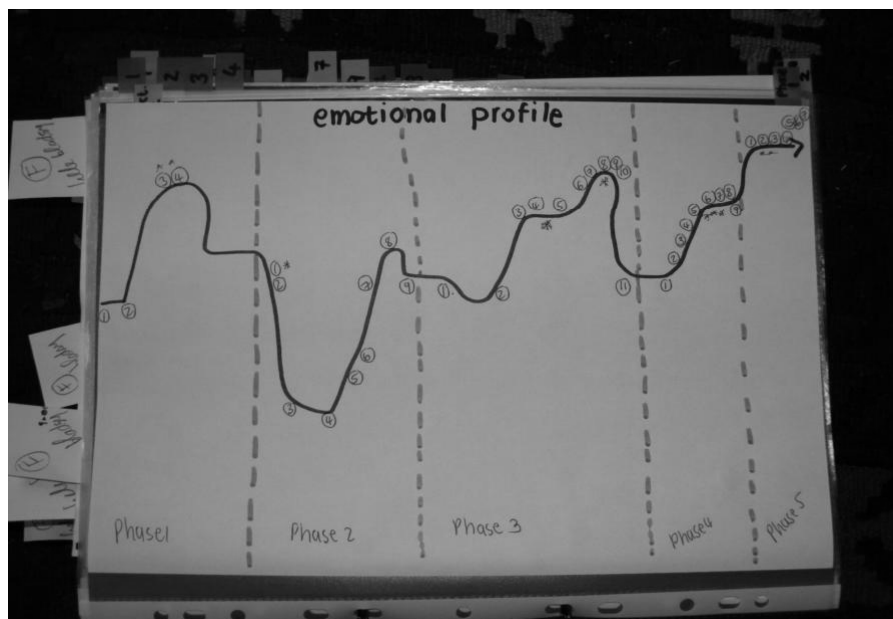
## Major problems that emerged during the course of the programme

- Open-ended programming contributed to the 'disorganized' status of the programme
- Student frustration regarding the lack of theoretical information (knowledge)
- Conflict among teaching staff not willing to accommodate the P-T model of operation and lack of cohesion between staff teaching on the programme
- Inability of students in take own responsibility to a learner-centred model

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**What makes a Distance Education model unique and effective in a school-based constructivist teacher training environment?**

- Teachers (learners) are exposed to an authentic education landscape.
- Capacity and strength of tutorials to disseminate new information.
- Great opportunities to contribute to change at micro (local/school) level.
- Adoption of a common teaching philosophy is achievable within the DE environment.

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**What makes a Distance Education model less effective as a school-based constructivist teacher training environment?**

- Limited progressive and futuristic mentors.
- Little space and time for regular and ongoing mentoring of the interventions.
- Few specialists working the constructivist and practice-theory landscapes.
- Challenging 'change management' environments.
- Institutional and governmental resistance.
- Difficulty in introducing and managing strategies, approaches and methods through text.
- Little opportunity to engage and reflect with fellow students across different schools.

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## What aspects should DE managers consider when designing interventional DE programmes?

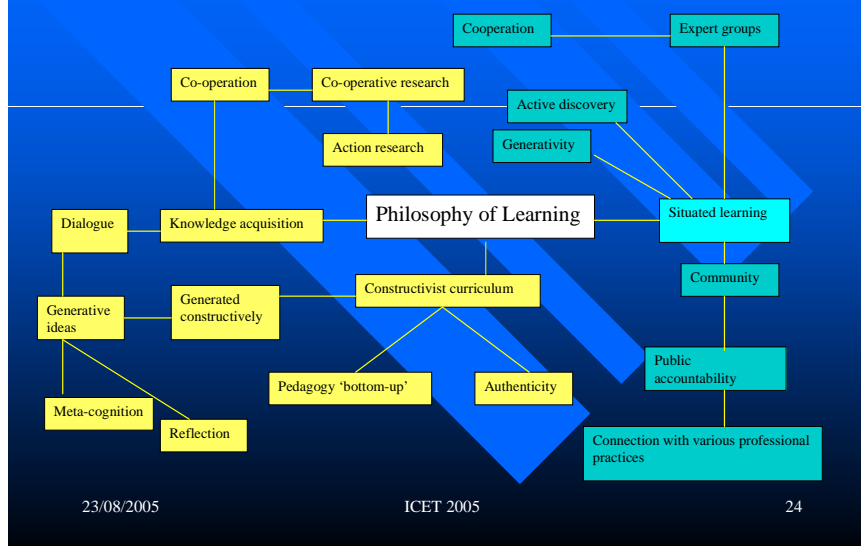
- **Systemic Design Issues**
  - Interventional practices
  - Mentor/tutor training and responsibilities
- **Curriculum Issues**
  - Pedagogical standards
  - Visionary and futuristic outcomes
- **Assessment Issues**
  - Aspects of student accountability
- **Developmental issues**
  - Challenging Pedagogical Practices

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### Theoretical Framework applicable to Constructivist Teacher Education



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**I thank you!**  
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