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Introduction

Since September 2007, all new entrants to teaching in the Lifelong Learning sector (which includes Further Education, Adult Community Learning, Work based Learning, private and public training providers) have been required to complete a series of new teacher training awards. This was in response to the 2006 White Paper, Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances and known as the Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector in England, 2007-2012 (LLUK 2007). The whole development is part of the move towards professional status for FE teachers: Associate Teacher Learning and Skills (ATLS) and Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS).

The main policy driver behind the reforms has been Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), who developed a new suite of standards for the sector. These standards were in response to the proposals in the 2004 report Equipping Our Teachers for the Future: Success for all and have then been used to structure the new levels of qualifications which are PTLLS - Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector at Level 3 and 4 and is the starting point for all new entrants, unless they have a previous legacy qualification. The CTLLS - Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector Level 3 and 4 is mainly for an Associate teaching role and finally DTLLS - Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector Levels 4, 5 & 6 which is for those in a Full teaching role.

Further guidance from LLUK on the sector requirements identifies two distinct teaching roles in the Lifelong Learning Sector mentioned beforehand: i.e. The Associate Teacher Role (ATLS), which is defined as carrying fewer teaching responsibilities than a full role and teaches predominantly from packs or pre-prepared materials, and therefore has fewer responsibilities in design of curriculum and materials and The Full Teacher Role (QTLS), which is defined for all those entering the profession who take on the full responsibilities of a teacher role by designing, developing and evaluating the curriculum and materials they use and that they teach across a range of levels, subjects and learner types.

In addition, all existing and new teachers have been required to become a member of the Institute for Learning (IfL) http://www.ifl.ac.uk, which is the professional body for the sector and provides the mechanism by which all teachers have to register and progress through to Licensed Practitioners and Professional Formation to achieve ATLS/QTLS status. All registered teachers in the Lifelong Learning Sector will be Ifl members and therefore subject to their Code of Professional Practice and will be obliged to maintain a continuing professional development (CPD) log annually which can be sampled at any time.

The standards also included drivers for improving literacy, language, numeracy and ICT skills across the sector and particularly through teacher education and training, but also as part of the professional formation to ATLS and QTLS. This has been addressed by the introduction and embedding of minimum core and is outlined in Defining the minimum core of teachers' knowledge, understanding and personal skills (LLUK 2007)

Project Title

ITE team networking and sharing ‘best’ practice across the franchised partnership to enhance the development and embedding of minimum core and use of ILT (Pebblepad)

Context

Telford College is a large general FE college based in Wellington, Shropshire. The college is divided into 5 Directorates and within each directorate there are a number of schools. Initial Teacher Education is positioned in the School of Professional Studies which in turn is housed within the Directorate of Leisure, Business and Professional Studies (LBAPS). The School has a wide remit to support all staff undertaking their initial teacher training, but is also accessible to external trainees from a range of settings in the local area, across the County and the wider region. The curriculum area has always
delivered the full range of ITT programmes through City and Guilds Awarding Body and as a franchised partner of the University of Wolverhampton. Since the changes in ITT awards made in 2007, we deliver the full range of PTLLS, CTLLS and DTLLS through City and Guilds, as well as a HEI DTLLS Certificate and Professional Graduate Certificate in Education as a franchised partner of the University of Wolverhampton.

**Aims and Objectives**

The main aim of the project for the whole team has been to ensure equality and inclusion for ITT trainees whilst implementing the new workforce reforms which in turn has transformed the ITT qualification structure. The team has gained considerable knowledge and skills embracing innovative developments within the curriculum delivery, but have had no comparability with others as to what was being implemented across the sector. By creating an opportunity for collaboration with other partner colleges and opening a dialogue with other practitioners, the team has been able to engage in field research about how other providers are managing the same changes, discuss and share valuable initiatives whilst concreting their own experiences through reflection on action (Schon 1983).

The key focus has been to review what other franchised partners offer as a provision to meet the new workforce reforms in FE in support of the new Associate and Full roles, whilst also examining how practitioners have embraced new technology. This has enabled the ITT team to explore and make comparisons, learn from different approaches whilst entering into a dialogue to share experiences that either reinforced what we do or made us reflect on what we could do differently. Listening to others’ perspectives and their positioning has been insightful for example: we have had an ongoing issue with individual trainees having a very clear path they wish to follow. The dilemma being their status of either pre-service or voluntary, one awarding body states this is allowable whilst another is promoting purely an in-service programme, from our research this not only appears to bring into question the parity between the two awarding body routes to the same outcome, but also that franchised partners are interpreting what they advise trainees differently.

With the range of backgrounds of trainees enrolling on ITT programmes, i.e. private training providers, military, HMYOI and those self employed, a key focus has been to promote ‘learning communities’ both within the classroom and remotely. Each member of the team has questioned how they could get students to support one another whilst being disparate in their working lives and commitments through effective use of technology. By having an ILT champion in the team in the first instance, we have all taken small steps rather than giant strides to undertake developments in the use of alternative software packages, this cascading effect for individual team members’ CPD has been to embrace new technology such as Pebblepad, blogs, e-portfolios, web quests, web folios, video casts to name just a few, by taking risks and trail blazing new opportunities.

As stated within our overall aim, the equality, inclusion and development of the ITT trainees has been pivotal to each team member’s CPD development, to act as a facilitator and catalyst, inspiring others to try new things out with their own learners using ILT and embed literacy, language, numeracy and ICT in their own teaching. The team have not just promoted and developed their own ideas in terms of the technology used, but also created collaborative tools for the trainees to engage with, through blogs and learning communities, encouraging trainees to talk to one another, learn from their own research and share this with their peers, encouraging them to talk about it, trial it and reflect on the outcomes.

**2 Strategies**

Our methods were to engage in a dialogue, both formal and informal with a small sample of partner colleagues, through a questionnaire and one to one discussion, this was mainly those working in a Further Education College setting, however, one participant in particular was sought as an ‘expert’ in ILT developments and works in a University. The questionnaire and discussion were completed either by telephone or through a face to face meeting. The formal questionnaire compilation has provided some quantitative and qualitative findings (Appendix 1), whilst the informal exploratory approach has had
quite a different and immediate impact on the learners themselves, appendix 2 provides a summary of the programme evaluation and comments from the learners through the implementation of what has been investigated.

The most successful strategies have been when the team have been able to meet face to face with colleagues, as this has created an opportunity for individuals to showcase work or innovations and talk through the highs and lows of particular projects. Collaboration tends to spark more ideas and opportunities to look at something from a different angle or to better something further, which promotes the ‘ripples in the pond’ cascading effect.

One member of the team has already been working closely with partners within the West Midlands Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (WMCETT) community, primarily piloting an initial assessment tool for trainees entering ITT, but focusing on the Adult and Community Learning sectors. This has provided a solid research base and launch pad to extend that enquiry further with local partners and colleagues. The results of the questionnaire have found some similarities in practice, whilst highlighting some startling differences. (Appendix 1)

Whilst implementing the workforce reforms, the team have wrestled with the interpretation of the two roles, Associate and Full and advising trainees of their best route into ITT and whether that should be the CTLLS or DTLLS award. It is interesting to note from the results of the questionnaire that one organisation College A in particular, has chosen to ignore the Associate role and classified all trainees as aspiring to the Full role, whilst still offering a CTLLS award. Most organisations offer a full range of provision with the exception of one, college D, who only offer a HEI Certificate and Professional Graduate Certificate in Education, with PTLLS and CTLLS outcomes stepping off points, further discussions with the colleague from college D has raised some concerns about when to apply for certification and the lateness of these being made available to the trainees. This also raised a further question about the transition from one award to another and the levels of the outcomes achieved.

College B clearly provided wider opportunities for trainees in terms of attendance patterns and locations, this was also followed up with a range of awarding bodies utilised to deliver the provision. The one aspect that does need to be taken into account is that college B is a recently formed consortium of 3 regionally based colleges across a large rural county and therefore has to address a significantly disparate and sometimes very specialist range of subject contexts.

From the results of the questionnaire, the embedding of minimum core clearly supports literacy and language more transparently than numeracy in all cases, whilst only one college has a designated skills for life specialist within the initial teacher training team. There appears to be a disparity in when the testing of literacy and numeracy skills takes place across the sample, with one college testing prior to commencement to ensure trainees have the required level upon entry whilst others accept prior qualification evidence at the application process. Most colleges appear to complete some form of skills audit whilst on programme, which then informs what support needs or additional training is required, this in turn is monitored through either an individual learning or development plan (ILP), which can be reviewed and updated at regular intervals.

As far as ILT skills, all colleges utilise different forms of technology for delivery through mostly blended approaches and include supporting the wider communication process with trainees working remotely and mainly attending part-time, through email, mobile technology and organisational virtual learning environments (VLEs). Two colleges utilise PebblePad and another the IfL version called ‘Reflect’, which is promoted to IfL members to record their CPD and reflection progress.

One member of the team sought the expertise of an ILT sage, Julie Hughes, who works within a University setting and who demonstrated how she utilises other more extensive functions within the PebblePad software already extensively used within the programmes at CTLLS and DTLLS level here at Telford College. These insights have been the starting point of the next phase of curriculum innovations, which include the introduction of a learning community concept which the team have called ‘pods’, to
cluster small groups of trainees within the large group together, to enable them to not only research independently but then encourage sharing this with others within their ‘pod’. This has created a learning community environment and trainee autonomy, with peer support rather than the ITT tutor being the fountain for all knowledge.

The main driver has been a move from a traditional model of teaching to a new model of ‘learning communities’ (Palloff and Pratt 1999 and Wenger 1999) and has been targeted at the CTLLS course and who are predominantly part-time teachers/trainers in an Associate role. These individuals who work full-time elsewhere and only teach/train on a part-time basis, may not have the wider network support that a full role would get access to. What has worked is that most trainees find the concept of a ‘pod’ irresistible, appendix 2 provides a summary of the course evaluation from the trainees themselves. They mainly work in training organisations and may not get access to work closely with others, so a sense of belonging through the learning community and being able to communicate with each other remotely has been a real high point.

The learning community groups were decided in week 3 and 4 of the programme, once trainees became familiar with each other and the team with them. Groups were from mixed working contexts so that they got greatest access to a range of settings within their ‘pods’. It was essential to provide more tutorial support and interestingly, those that enjoyed the concept more were the trainees that attended the tutorials, where they had access to the tutor for support and one to one reviews and action planning.

The trainee autonomy has been most noticeable, researching independently, finding out about topics and sharing that with others (Appendix 3). Peer observations were encouraged through the ‘pod’ format to learn from each others practices and build trust, sharing and disseminating resources and demonstrating how they work. Assessed presentations were also delivered through the ‘pod’, the noticeable transformation here was that feedback was more in-depth and the honesty was overwhelming. What the ITT tutor experienced is a change in their role to that of becoming the ‘wrapper’ around the ‘pods’ summarising and facilitating, whilst the learners themselves were the ones praising and motivating, recognising achievement in one another.

What worked less well was engaging with those trainees that already had access to working and community relationships through their place of work, in the main the ones that already worked in the general FE setting. These trainees received the ‘Pod’ concept less well and the main future consideration will be a bigger emphasis on getting tutorials organised and ensuring that trainees attend. An IT suite is critical to support the use of PebblePad whilst seeing individuals on a one to one basis.

Other developmental aspects have occurred through the use of PebblePad were; as a minimum core self assessment web folio and a web quest to support further independent research and assessment of an option unit within the CTLLS award (Appendix 4). Video casts of trainees’ presentations to their peers were also utilized to review and reflect on personal developments in literacy and language. Other applications such as Dreamweaver are being investigated to apply sound bites onto a webpage where an on-line version of the IA will be made accessible in the future.

3 Outcomes and Impact

The distance travelled has been the ongoing developments within initial teacher education, both for the ITT team, as well as the trainees themselves. By taking some time away from the task orientated roles we sometimes find ourselves in and engaging in conversation with others, has been enlightening and provoking. We feel obligated to ensure that trainees are well equipped for their roles as tutors, teachers, and trainers within the sector and that they are able to engage with those younger learners who will be fully versant and competent with using a range of technology.

There have been two starting points, one in 2005 when we were asked to engage with a pilot project through the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC ) to use PebblePad as a new technology based
learning tool, which has continued to be developed since then; the other was 2007, with the launch of the work force reforms. The opportunity provided within this project has been to consolidate and expand current practice through dialogue and collegiality with partner colleges which has informed and promoted further ideas.

We firmly believe there is no end point, as we strive to evolve and refine what we do for our trainees and the wider community, we are all on a learning journey that is lifelong, if we decide not to follow this philosophical perspective then we are doing ourselves, our trainees and the sector a disservice. A key objective for the future would be to have access to the tools we use through a similar media such as Facebook, where potential trainees can immediately access initial assessment activities, blogs, video pod casts from day one of their enquiry about initial teacher training.

The original initial assessment tool introduced in 2007 continues to be developed as a diagnostic assessment for literacy via the Move On (www.move-on.org.uk/) which provides an on-line literacy and numeracy assessment, this provides a break down of the results in terms of where there might be skills gaps. In addition, the IA also incorporates a free writing, proof reading and comprehension task and an ILT self assessment, all of these then go onto to inform the ILP which is reviewed 3 times during both years of the DTLLS awards. The IA is utilised as a focus throughout the programme e.g. if there is a lack of proof reading in submissions, this would then be updated on the ILP, which is embedded and tackled throughout the programme.

The team continues to cascade their developments, where champions of best practice have led and mentored others, disseminating and supporting team members about the pedagogic benefits of changes in practice and not just the more extended use of ILT in the classroom, but much wider than this is engaging with trainees and their learning communities outside class contact time. This in turn has had a significant effect on the trainees themselves to become more autonomous, better researchers and to have others in their ‘pod’ they can talk too about problems, critically reflect on practice and know they are not alone.

From the internal organisation perspective, new trainees’ in-service cascade their enthusiasm and creativity within their own teams, getting new ideas flowing, looking at innovative ways of delivering the curriculum to the student population. With PebblePad being licensed across the whole organisation, trainees have gone onto using blogs and e-portfolios with their own learners. Those trainees and organisations that are external are provided with the opportunity to see other perspectives and have exposure to other contexts and settings. What trainees have learnt about initial assessment and session planning have then been shared within their own organisation, which in turn have adopted similar practices using initial assessment tools and taking the lesson planner document as their own resource for ‘best practice’.

4 Learning Points

The whole team would agree that they have learnt considerably more than they had originally expected in terms of how far their own practice has evolved and astonishingly how far there is still to go. We have been surprised at how receptive colleagues and trainees have been, being open and honest about their own developments. From all aspects, trainees have embraced the opportunities offered, using the technology through workshops activities, they were quick to pick up the threads and work with it, this in turn promotes the need for the sector to embrace all forms of mobile technology as the younger generations coming through will be fully conversant in their application.

As already mentioned previously, what we have been engaged with is totally sustainable and continuing to evolve each year. What will be done and is being done differently are a number of aspects, one being that the initial assessment is being trialled as the first record of a potential trainees position or ‘role’, which can then be utilised to signpost them to either the CTLLS or DTLLS award route. The other is to ensure a more disciplined approach to trainees meeting deadlines, setting ground rules within the
learning communities. The ITT tutor role/relationship clearly changed and this affected the interaction and exchange with the ITT tutor which trainees took advantage of.

What has been rewarding is that the benefits have outweighed the risks, the trainees' excitement and enthusiasm to embrace discovery learning through the 'pods' has also led the ITT tutor to become a learner themselves, through the mutual learning community environment being established. Although most trainees baulked at the mention of numbers and maths, a numeracy workshop has been a great success in demystifying the application of number for the ITT team and trainees alike and from a very practical level, whilst in small groups of 3 or 4 the learning community thread was continued as everyone helped each other unravel the problems e.g. playing dominoes using factions and percentages.

Another exciting revelation has taken place during a recent team meeting and curriculum development discussion, which has disclosed a different model of curriculum delivery and management of course teams, from programmes to unit teams. All the current provision has historically been organised as bespoke programmes or courses, what is now emerging is that a more unitised approach may be needed, this can be justified through the 'cashing in' as you go approach that the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) promotes. A change in operational approaches should enable teams to standardise assessment, offer level 3 and 4 outcomes where appropriate and overcome the difficulty of individual starting points and aspirations to progress.

5 Synopsis

The main focus of this project has been to raise the ITE team's awareness in terms of current practice implementation and development for the future, by making some comparisons with partner colleges of the interpretation of the workforce reforms and qualification framework, as well as review the application of ILT to support the ITE team and trainees' development of new technologies.

The team have enjoyed and been encouraged by the dialogues at a local level with partner colleges and practitioners, but have also engaged with a much wider audience through WMCETT, JISC and ESCalate (Education Subject Centre of the Higher Education Academy) conferences, presenting and sharing what has been accomplished. This has not only helped reinforce ideas and practice, but has consolidated the interpretation of the new work force reforms in terms of the equality and inclusivity of the trainees, which has been the main aim throughout.

6 Key words

Collaboration, learning communities, PebblePad, transformations

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LLUK (2007) Defining the minimum core of teachers' knowledge, understanding and personal skills

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Available at http://www.move-on.org.uk/ (accessed 26 June 2009) w


Appendix 1

WMCETT – ITE Research Projects - Outline Questions and results

Questions:

1. What ITT provision do you offer? AND 2. How many ITT programmes are involved?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>City &amp; Guilds PTLLS</th>
<th>C &amp; G CTLLS</th>
<th>DTLLS</th>
<th>HEI PCE</th>
<th>HEI PGCE</th>
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<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>* 6</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No of programmes</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>* HEI</td>
<td>* HEI</td>
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<td>*</td>
<td>+ SFL lit and numeracy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes – offered provision

Questions:

2. What modes of delivery do you offer? AND 4. Which awarding bodies are you aligned to?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Part time eve</th>
<th>Part-time Day</th>
<th>PGCE day and EVE</th>
<th>Block</th>
<th>outreach</th>
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<td></td>
<td>HEI</td>
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* Denotes what mode offered

Question:

5 How do you approach the interpretation of ‘role’, when advising applicants on the appropriate route into ITT?

TCAT

One to one discussion to discover range of teaching/training being undertaken, if working on a narrow range then advised to do CTLLS, an enrolment checklist is completed to clarify prerequisites

Have used a checklist drawn up from LLUK descriptors in inform advice given

PTLLS is currently separated and front ended for CTLLS, but included in DTLLS

DTLLS is through an application and interview with the potential trainee, an extensive of the initial assessment tool devised in 2007 is being used for this year’s applicants

Specific advice and guidance sessions are offered in June and Sept with PPT and one to one discussion
College A

PPT Presentation with a key question ‘what do intend to be? That answer can be difficult because they may also be an associate now, but want to be in full role
Have 3 evenings for advice, guidance and a briefing in March April and May – at the briefing they do an on-line assessment and free writing task
College – has no one at associate level
Allowed to go onto DTLLS because aspiring to full role

College B

If in a ‘full’ teaching staff offered DTLLS (must have significant teaching)
If part-time instructional staff offered CTLLS

College C

Basically an either/or case
An Associate role is usually linked to assessors who deliver off the self materials and courses

College D

DTLLS – full role writing SOW, LP’s doing tutorials and assessment
PTLLS – basic toolkit of progression to DTLLS or Taster
CTLLS – limited preparation and planning role, refer to LLUK and employer

Questions:

6. What is your approach to developing functional skills – literacy, numeracy and IT skills  AND  7. What kinds of opportunities do students have to contact staff and peers outside of class provision?  AND  8. Do you use a ‘Blended Learning’ approach and what sort of technology do you use?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Numeracy</th>
<th>IT, Student contact &amp; Blended Learning</th>
<th>Subject</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TCAT</td>
<td>Initial assessment prior to entry through application and interview process Skills test on programme and now incorporated in IA process as a precursor SFL specialist part of ITE team, embedding in taught programme</td>
<td>Initial self assessment prior to entry Skills test on programme and not incorporated in IA Numeracy workshop from Q/A materials</td>
<td>Self assessment for IT skills Email, College intranet, PebblePad reflections ILT embedded within programme, blended approaches to teaching and learning</td>
<td>Level 3 subject for DTLLS and Cert ED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Applicants need level 2 West Notts Key skills builder Use of minimum core booklet</td>
<td>No testing prior or on programme</td>
<td>All blended into programme Use Reflect – IfL Contact by email and mobile</td>
<td>Level 3 specialism</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>Must have level 2 Lit Offer night classes Embedded lit Change to more study skills upfront</td>
<td>Working towards Offer night classes</td>
<td>Embedded across delivery Pebble, email, mobiles</td>
<td>Level 3 or significant experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Min core direct in sessions Use of minimum core booklet</td>
<td>Link development in ILP and action plan</td>
<td>Embedded Email, wiki site for CTLLS/DTLLS PTLLS blended and VLE Not using Pebble until 09</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Considerations as a result of these findings:

- Questions about provision did not establish what levels are being offered for PTLLS and CTLLS, i.e. level 3 or 4 or both.
- Has raised some concerns about disparity for progression opportunities for non graduates and graduates, i.e. HEI offers Cert Ed at levels 4 and 5 and Professional Graduate route at levels 5 and 6.
- The City & Guilds DTLLS only offers levels 4 and 5 across the board with no differentiation of post graduate.

Appendix 2

**Evaluation of blended/community learning approach taken for CTLLS ye430c**

This evaluation is based on student feedback offered on 24 June 09 and tutor’s thoughts.

**What worked well:**
- Students produced their own blogs to use to communicate with peers, electronically.
- Students enjoyed the sense of community and belonging facilitated by their pod blogs.
- Students enjoyed self-directed research.
- The quality of feedback to peers was of higher quality because of the trust between pod members.
- Cross-fertilization of ideas and approaches between pod members who work in different contexts (e.g., training organisation delivering first aid/teacher delivering Childcare in college environment).

**What worked less well**
- 3 students who work together did not fully engage with their pod and got less from the experience.
- Students who did not attend each tutorial would have appreciated greater guidance and reassurance.

**For this approach to work well it is essential that.............**

- Pods are selected
  - once the tutor knows students well
  - with members are from a wide range of teaching/training contexts
  - with at least one proactive member who will drive the process of sharing research findings with peers
  - and shown how to set up a blog
- Ground rules are made clear to ensure that:
  - Regular 1:1 tutorials are used to offer guidance and formative feedback on research.
  - Students attend each tutorial.
  - Hand-in deadlines are agreed and met.
- Traditional tutor-led sessions are held at the start of the programme to ensure “foundation” skills (e.g., lesson planning, research skills) are in place.
- Traditional tutor-led session are interspersed to ensure variety and any re-focus that may be required.
• The tutor is excited by the possibilities of the approach and is prepared to justify and sell it to adult learners, some of who have very limited experience of ILT.

Appendix 3
An example of a pod and learning communities.
Introduction

This e-portfolio relates to unit 3 of City and Guilds 7304 (Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector). The unit can be certificated at Level 3 or Level 4. To achieve level 4 your assignment must offer sufficient evidence that you have:

* made links between learning and your practice as a teacher including an ability to reflect
* offered evidence of research and reading which is referenced using Harvard

In this unit you will be considering the issue of promoting equality and diversity in teaching and learning. The teacher’s role is key to promoting an environment in which all individuals can achieve to their full potential and teachers in FE need to reflect on steps they can take to promote a successful and equal learning culture.

The approach you will take to this unit is based on research using a Webquest model. You will have the opportunity to attend tutorials during the programme. Dates and times for tutorials will be agreed between you and your tutor.

This e-portfolio has 4 sections and includes information that you will need to achieve the unit.