An introductory internet skills program for teacher education: or from practice to theory: a case study

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Abstract: This case study presentation will report on how the presenters successfully responded to the ‘just-in-time’ challenge of putting together an inservicing ‘introductory technological skills’ course for a ‘difficult’ group of teachers. The particular course which will be the focus of the presentation provided the specific opportunity for the two presenters to bring together their convergent but differing international experiences in teacher education to try and distil the key principles and practical requirements for developing an effective introductory internet skills program. Although many of the students undertaking this course began with little knowledge of computers let alone the internet, they all achieved in a short time (2 hours X 14 weeks) a basic and convergent competency in a range of generic internet skills: internet communications, online information literacy using browsers and search engines, developing animated powerpoint presentations and webpage learning resources, and other associated skills like FTPing and scanning graphics. Indeed, some of the initially less confident and even reluctant teacher-learners quickly became adept at using what for them was a completely new medium.

In other words, the presentation will cover some of the approaches, methods and activities used to transform reluctant or intimidated learners into keen users of the internet. This session will identify and discuss the kinds of simple practical skills and activities that can be linked together in progressive contexts of applied, relevant, and even ‘real-life’ learning to achieve a ‘spiral curriculum’ of effective reflective practice using the internet. The organization of the presentation will be as follows:

(i) an initial outline of the context of the challenge faced by the presenters;
(ii) an overview of how the presenters responded by developing this particular program in terms of ‘show-and-telling’ teacher-learner artifacts, anecdotes and other action research data;
(iii) a reflection on the course as case study, and about the key principles or strategies and kind of activities required to conduct an effective introductory internet skills course.

Note that this is an abstract for a Presentation which will complement two other papers by the presenters – 772 and 1033