DEVELOPING A WEB-BASED APP TO SUPPORT A RESEARCH ORIENTATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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There is a long-standing recognition of the benefits of a research orientation within teacher education. This seeks to enable teachers to become not only critical consumers of published educational research, but researchers of their own practice through practice-based enquiry. This involves gathering evidence in the workplace or on placement, taking action to change practice and reflecting on this with reference to relevant published material. While projects and assignments aimed at developing such a research orientation are prevalent in teacher education, mobile and web-based technologies to facilitate the processes involved are less common. This paper explores whether the development of a web based app, funded as part of the HEA’s strategic project in teacher education, could assist not only the collection and interpretation of evidence, but also collaborative research among teachers.

Thus the overarching aims of this project were to:

• further enhance outcomes for student teachers and their professional skills by strengthening their research enquiry projects;

• enable student teachers to make greater links between theory and practice, through the development of research skills;

• support the process of analysis and sharing of classroom practice evidence and student teachers’ reflection on their professional development.

This project aimed to deliver the following objectives:

• Development of an open-source, collaborative, practice-based research tool in the form of a web-based research app (WRApp) configured for use on mobile devices.

• Evidence of the trial use of this app by student teachers and tutors, through:
  - agreeing conceptual frameworks to support the collection of practice evidence, mainly through observation;
  - enabling student teachers to capture rich evidence of classroom practice in text, picture, audio and video forms, within the pre-planned conceptual framework;
  - facilitating analysis of evidence captured using the conceptual framework and the sharing and presentation of this evidence.