



## The Teaching-Research Nexus

A guide for academics and policy-makers  
in higher education

[www.trnexus.edu.au](http://www.trnexus.edu.au)

### Examples from Australian universities

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#### **Reflection in-Action and Reflection-on-Action: Designing, Constructively Aligning, and Researching Student Engagement in an Experiential Virtual Situated Learning Environment**

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**Broad discipline area:**

Management and Commerce

- Management
- Employment Relations

**Year level:**

- Final year undergraduate
- Postgraduate coursework

**TRN strategy:**

- Use of action research through self and student reflection and interpretation to link teaching practice to learning and teaching scholarship

**Teaching and learning context:**

- Blended learning environment used to engage students in learning activities that enable the development of work-ready capabilities typically achievable in work-integrated-learning environments

**Brief description of the initiative:**

This initiative links teaching practice of designing and constructively aligning an experiential learning environment, created as a Virtual Situated Learning Environments (VSLE) accessible to students through a University e-learning environment, and research through reflections of the academic (as designer of the innovation) and students (as the users of the innovation).

The teaching practice experience involved the constructive alignment of:

- the learning objectives of a range of management related courses, post-graduate and under-graduate, in courses related to employment relations, managing and leading, managing change, negotiating, managing in a cross-cultural environment

- activity-based learning activities in which students engage through the elearning environment
- assessment designed to identify both the discipline specific and generic graduate capability skills developed by students.

The particular Learning Environment in which the students engage in experiential learning opportunities is a 'virtual' Organisation that consists of a globally situated Hotel, Restaurant, Raw Food Suppliers and Travel/Transport chain, with rudimentary knowledge about the organisation provided for students. Work-Integrated authenticity of the VSLE is created through a web-site designed to have the look and feel of a real company web-site and accessible to the students through the University Learning Hub. The learning activities in which students engage (as virtual employees and managers of the Organisation) require them to problem-solve, negotiate, strategically plan and communicate, responses (from multiple cultural perspectives) to complex and ill-defined situations typical of real-world of work challenges. Assessment is designed to test the use of theory in addressing these challenges, as well as reflections of individual students and groups of students on the lesson learnt and skills developed through engaging in these learning activities.

Research into the teaching practice of using this VSLE is indicative of both traditional research and emerging forms of scholarship:

An action research approach, focussing on continuous trial, reflection, adaptation and change based on reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, has resulted in contributions to both discipline-related publications and educational publications (see publications below):

- Research has been undertaken into student exploration of how negotiations using Western models of negotiations differ from that of their home culture. Student contributions assisted the development of a new 'relationship' model of negotiations
- Research into student engagement and learning from their participation in the experiential activities from various cultural perspectives resulted in research into the value of elearning environments for international students
- Research into the opportunity created by the on-line environment to engage students globally

Newer forms of Scholarship in learning and teaching has taken the form of peer review of the use of the VSLE as a real-world learning to develop student work-ready skills. This has occurred through adaptation of the VSLE to other environments, for example it has been adapted for use into the Master of International Management Program offered by the Catholic University of Lille (France). It has also occurred through opening the VSLE to peer review through its publication in the Repository of Online role Play examples created from an ALTC funded, Project EnRole.

**For further details:**

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## **Publications and artefacts:**

### **Conferences papers**

- Jones, S.** (2007) 'Adding value to on-line role-plays; Virtual Situated Learning Environments'. In ICT; Providing Choices for learners and Learning; Proceedings Singapore, <http://www.ascilite.org.au/conference/singapore08/procs>. Dec
- Jones, S.** (2003), 'Developing Relationships – the Key to Collaborative Negotiation', *Proceedings, British Academy of Management Conference, September*. Harrogate
- Jones, S.** (2002), 'Relationship negotiating for the knowledge driven global networked economy', *IERA 3<sup>rd</sup> International Symposium*, San Francisco, October
- Jones, S.** (1999). 'Avoiding the spider, how to use technology to achieve collaborative education, *Cornerstones of Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australia* (22), Jamison, ACT: HERDSA.
- Jones, S; Jones, D. and McCann, J.** (2003), 'Designing and producing effective e-learning opportunities – moving from cross-functional teams to Communities of Practice (CoPs)', *E-Learning Conference*, Melbourne Dec
- Jones, S. & Richardson, J.** (2002), 'Designing an IT-augmented student-centred learning environment', in Goody, A Herrington, J. & Northcote, M. (Eds.), *Quality Conversations: Research and Development in Higher Education* (25). Jamieson, ACT: HERDSA
- Jones, S. & Sobiecki, P.** (2002), 'Student-centred learning and International Students, *Proceedings 6th Pacific Rim 1st year in HE Conference*, New Zealand, July

### **Book Chapters**

- Jones, S** (2007), 'On-line discourse: encouraging active student participation in large classes', McKay, E. (Ed.), *Enhancing Learning Through Human-Capital Interactions*, Idea Group Inc.
- Jones, S.** (2005), 'Using IT to augment authentic learning environments', Herrington, A. and Herrington, J. *Authentic Learning Environments*, Idea Group Inc. USA, pp172-181
- Jones, S. & McCann, J.** (2004), 'Virtual Situated Learning Environments-the business education model for developing countries in a knowledge era', *Business Education and Emerging Market Economies*, Kluwer, pp.201-216

### **Journal articles**

- Jones, S.** (2001), 'Partner or predator in teaching employment relations', *The International Employment Relations Review*, 7(2), pp.75-87
- Jones, S. & McCann, J.** (2005), 'Authentic situated learning environments-the flexible learning alternative for peripatetic managers in a global world of flexible workplaces' *Special Issue of Journal of Workplace Learning –E-Learning at the Workplace*, 17(5/6), pp.359-369

### **Carrick funded project into on-line role-play (Project Enrole)**

[http://www.cedir.uow.edu.au/enrole/rp\\_repository.html](http://www.cedir.uow.edu.au/enrole/rp_repository.html).

### **University Publications**

<http://www.rmit.edu.ID>. *Linking Postgraduates to Europe* 20.10.2006