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**A TEACHER'S RESEARCH JOURNEY INTO E-LEARNING:  
ALIGNING TECHNOLOGY, PEDAGOGY AND CONTEXT**

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Massey University, Auckland, New Zealand

Mandia Mentis

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis represents my own work except where due acknowledgement is made and that this material has not been included in a thesis or report submitted to Massey University or any other university for a degree or other qualification.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Mentis", is written above a horizontal dotted line.

Mandia Mentis

Candidate for PhD

## **ABSTRACT**

e-Learning has the potential to radically change the way we teach and learn in higher education, but there is ongoing debate as to what constitutes effective e-learning environments. This study explores the interrelated areas of e-learning technology and pedagogy within the context of a postgraduate special education and educational psychology programme. The study is framed in a scholarship of teaching and learning approach and covers three successive phases of overlapping activities of teaching, learning and research.

The first phase of the research focuses on the design of a community of practice approach to e-learning. The aim is to enable students to develop their identity as members of the professional community by bridging the gap between university-based learning and its real-world application. In the second phase of the research, alternative technology is used to investigate a better alignment of e-learning technology and pedagogy. The findings here show that a community of practice pedagogy is better aligned with a social constructionist e-learning technology. In the third phase of the research an e-learning alignment guide is developed to analyse the changes in e-learning in relation to the interrelated areas of technology, pedagogy and context. The guide is applied to the e-learning case studies in Phases 1 and 2 of this study. The profiles of alignment from these case studies illustrate the complexities and tensions in e-learning and the potential of linking advanced technologies with effective teaching practices to change the way we teach and learn.

The key finding of this study is that careful alignment of technology, pedagogy and context is needed to actualise the potential of e-learning in higher education. The e-learning alignment guide developed in this study enables analysis of e-learning environments to provide alignment profiles. Aligning innovative technologies with appropriate pedagogies in different contexts is essential for e-learning to meet the needs of learners in the digital age. The enormous and rapid development of new educational technologies has seriously challenged traditional forms of pedagogy. This study shows that both a scholarship of teaching and learning approach and the use of the e-learning alignment guide can make a positive contribution to designing effective e-learning environments.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	<b>I</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>II</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>III</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	<b>VI</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>VII</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2 BACKGROUND.....	2
1.2.1 <i>Vignettes</i> .....	3
1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY.....	6
1.4 OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS.....	7
1.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	11
<b>CHAPTER TWO: THE RESEARCH JOURNEY</b> .....	<b>13</b>
2.1 INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER OVERVIEW.....	13
2.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND ISSUES.....	14
2.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH.....	16
2.4 SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACH.....	17
2.4.1 <i>Epistemology— Constructionism</i> .....	22
2.4.2 <i>Reflective Practice</i> .....	25
2.4.3 <i>Practitioner Research</i> .....	27
2.4.4 <i>Case Study</i> .....	30
2.4.5 <i>Ethical Considerations</i> .....	34
2.5 THREE PHASES OF THE STUDY.....	36
2.5.1 <i>Phase 1</i> .....	37
2.5.2 <i>Phase 2</i> .....	39
2.5.3 <i>Phase 3</i> .....	41
2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	43
<b>CHAPTER THREE: THE THEORETICAL TERRAIN</b> .....	<b>45</b>
3.1 INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER OVERVIEW.....	45
3.2 OVERVIEW OF THEORY IN E-LEARNING.....	47
3.3 THE COMPASS.....	51
3.3.1 <i>Key Research Areas in e-Learning</i> .....	53
3.3.2 <i>Technology Quadrant</i> .....	58
3.3.3 <i>Pedagogy Quadrant</i> .....	64
3.3.4 <i>Context Quadrant</i> .....	71
3.3.5 <i>Critiques Quadrant</i> .....	74
3.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	76
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: PHASE 1 OF THE E-LEARNING JOURNEY</b> .....	<b>78</b>
4.1 INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER OVERVIEW.....	78
4.2 PHASE 1: LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES.....	80
4.2.1 <i>Learning Activities in Phase 1</i> .....	80
4.2.2 <i>Learning Outcomes in Phase 1</i> .....	82
4.3 PHASE 1: TEACHING ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES.....	93
4.3.1 <i>Teaching Activity — Case Study 1</i> .....	93
4.3.2 <i>Teaching Outcomes — Case Study 1 Evaluation</i> .....	95
4.4 PHASE 1: RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES.....	106
4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	108
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: PHASE 2 OF THE E-LEARNING JOURNEY</b> .....	<b>110</b>
5.1 INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER OVERVIEW.....	110
5.2 PHASE 2: LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES.....	112
5.2.1 <i>Learning Activities in Phase 2</i> .....	113

5.2.2	<i>Learning Outcomes in Phase 2</i> .....	115
5.3	PHASE 2: TEACHING ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES .....	128
5.3.1	<i>Teaching Activity — Case Study 2</i> .....	128
5.3.2	<i>Teaching Outcomes — Case Study 2 Evaluation</i> .....	131
5.4	PHASE 2: RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES .....	147
5.5	CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	150
<b>CHAPTER SIX: PHASE 3 OF THE E-LEARNING JOURNEY .....</b>		<b>151</b>
6.1	INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER OVERVIEW .....	151
6.2	PHASE 3: LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES .....	153
6.2.1	<i>Learning Activities in Phase 3</i> .....	154
6.2.2	<i>Learning Outcomes in Phase 3</i> .....	155
6.3	PHASE 3: TEACHING ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES .....	159
6.3.1	<i>Teaching Activity — Developing an Alignment Guide for e-Learning</i> .....	160
6.3.2	<i>Teaching Outcomes — The e-Learning Alignment Guide (eLAG)</i> .....	165
6.4	PHASE 3: RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES .....	191
6.5	CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	194
<b>CHAPTER SEVEN: THE JOURNEY REVISITED .....</b>		<b>196</b>
7.1	INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER OVERVIEW .....	196
7.2	CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS .....	196
7.2.1	<i>Applying the eLAG to Case Study 1 in Phase 1</i> .....	200
7.2.2	<i>Applying the eLAG to Case Study 2 in Phase 2</i> .....	204
7.3	CONTRIBUTIONS TO E-LEARNING TEACHING AND RESEARCH .....	209
7.3.1	<i>Locating the Vignettes on the eLAG</i> .....	211
7.4	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY .....	216
7.4.1	<i>Limitations Relating to the SoTL Approach</i> .....	216
7.4.2	<i>Limitations Relating to e-Learning Research</i> .....	221
7.5	FUTURE E-LEARNING JOURNEYS .....	223
7.5.1	<i>Future Research Relating to the Technology Zone</i> .....	223
7.5.2	<i>Future Research Relating to the Pedagogy Zone</i> .....	224
7.5.3	<i>Future Research Relating to the Context Zone</i> .....	227
7.6	CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	228
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>		<b>231</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>		<b>244</b>
APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF E-LEARNING TERMS AS USED IN THIS STUDY .....		244
APPENDIX B: MASSEY UNIVERSITY HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE – ETHICAL APPROVAL .....		246
APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET .....		247
APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM .....		249
APPENDIX E: COMPETENCY DOMAINS IN THE SEEP PROGRAMME .....		250
APPENDIX F: STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE .....		252
APPENDIX G: STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE .....		257

## LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table 4.1</i>	Students' Perceptions of the Value of <i>WebCT</i> tools (n = 54).....	96
<i>Table 4.2</i>	Students' Perceptions of e-Learning in Case Study 1 .....	98
<i>Table 4.3</i>	Students' Perceptions of a CoP Approach in Case Study 1 .....	99
<i>Table 4.4</i>	Analysis of Discussion Postings by Phase and Type .....	100
<i>Table 5.1</i>	Students' Experiences of e-Learning in Case Study 2.....	132
<i>Table 5.2</i>	Students' Perception of the Effectiveness of the <i>Moodle</i> Tools .....	135
<i>Table 5.3</i>	Students' Perceptions of a CoP Approach in Case Study 2.....	139
<i>Table 5.4</i>	Online Activity for the Community Site and Course Related Sites .....	142
<i>Table 6.1</i>	Guide for Navigating the Technology Zone in e-Learning Design.....	175
<i>Table 6.2</i>	Guide for Navigating the Pedagogy Zone in e-Learning Design.....	185
<i>Table 6.3</i>	Guide for Navigating the Context Zone in e-Learning Design.....	191
<i>Table 6.4</i>	Locating Case Study 1 on the eLAG .....	204
<i>Table 6.5</i>	Locating Case Study 2 on the eLAG .....	208
<i>Table 6.6</i>	Locating the three vignettes of e-learning on the eLAG .....	215



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1:	The three activities of learning, teaching and research.....	18
Figure 2-2:	The epistemology of constructionism.....	22
Figure 2-3:	Reflective practice .....	25
Figure 2-4:	Practitioner research .....	27
Figure 2-5:	Case study .....	30
Figure 2-6:	The three phases of the study .....	36
Figure 2-7:	Phase 1 of the study .....	38
Figure 2-8:	Phase 2 of the study .....	40
Figure 2-9:	Phase 3 of the study .....	42
Figure 3-1:	The four quadrants of the e-learning ‘compass’.....	46
Figure 4-1:	Phase 1 of the study .....	79
Figure 4-2:	The learning activities and outcomes of Phase 1.....	80
Figure 4-3:	The CoP dimensions of domain, community and practice .....	85
Figure 4-4:	The CoP dimensions linked to <i>WebCT</i> tools.....	88
Figure 4-5:	The CoP dimensions, <i>WebCT</i> tools and SEEP Programme.....	91
Figure 4-6:	<i>WebCT</i> home page.....	92
Figure 4-7:	The teaching activities and outcomes of Phase 1 .....	93
Figure 4-8:	Time triangles.....	101
Figure 4-9:	The research activities and outcomes of Phase 1 .....	107
Figure 5-1:	Phase 2 of the study .....	111
Figure 5-2:	The learning activities and outcomes of Phase 2.....	112
Figure 5-3:	The <i>Moodle</i> homepage for the SEEP e-learning environment.....	121
Figure 5-4:	The course page for the special education paper.....	127
Figure 5-5:	The teaching activities and outcomes of Phase 2 .....	128
Figure 5-6:	The research activities and outcomes of Phase 2 .....	148
Figure 6-1:	Phase 3 of the study .....	153
Figure 6-2:	The learning activities and outcomes of Phase 3.....	154
Figure 6.3:	The teaching activities and outcomes of Phase 3.....	160
Figure 6-4:	The technology zone of the eLAG.....	167
Figure 6-5:	The pedagogy zone of the eLAG.....	176
Figure 6-6:	The context zone of the eLAG .....	186
Figure 6-7:	The research activities and outcomes of Phase 3 .....	192
Figure 7-1:	Locating Case Study 1 technology on the eLAG .....	200
Figure 7-2:	Locating Case Study 1 pedagogy on the eLAG .....	201
Figure 7-3:	Locating Case Study 1 context on the eLAG.....	202
Figure 7-4:	Locating Case Study 2 technology on the eLAG .....	205
Figure 7-5:	Locating Case Study 2 pedagogy on the eLAG .....	206
Figure 7-3:	Locating Case Study 2 context on the eLAG.....	207