Collaborative Teaching And Learning: Reflections On A Facilitated Journey

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This report summarises the first year of an innovative and multilayered learning teaching collaborative experience within the context of an undergraduate unit in early childhood. The facilitative influence is twofold: a) Generic Information Skills Training (GIST) project which is a joint initiative between the Institute of Early Childhood, the Library and the Centre for Flexible Learning to teach information literacy skills which are contextualised within the unit presentation mode, its requirements and assessment tasks, and b) redesigning of the unit from a former third year level to a first year level to incorporate the notion of problem-based, collaborative teaching and learning. Many challenges were faced by those involved in the unit in its first year, mainly class size and heterogeneity of student levels, incorporation of technology into learning and teaching, and flow of information for smooth operations for students, the teaching team and the Library staff. Multi-level collaborations were central to this experience, and examples of student-student, student-teacher, and teacher-staff collaborations are provided. The first of the two-year cycle of the GIST project has generated substantive data, as has the implementation of the unit in an innovative format. The complexity and challenges presented in the unit seemed to account for about 25% student withdrawal from / deferral of the unit; final evaluations are obtained from 292 students. Survey results presented here are both from the withdrawn students, as well as those who completed the unit. Modifications to the delivery of the unit in its second year and ways of strengthening the communities of learners and teachers towards a common goal are briefly reviewed.