Paper 2) Encouraging postgraduate students of education to cross conceptual thresholds and achieve threshold concepts in their research
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Most research into threshold concepts (Meyer and Land 2006) concentrates on undergraduates learning in the disciplines. Our work (Wisker, Robinson, Trafford Leshem, Lilly, Warnes, 2004, 2007) concentrates on postgraduate student learning, and to date has considered research design, supervisory interactions, research development programme support, writing, communities of practice and examinations. Early work which underpins a large cross-university NTFS project (2007) reported here focuses on the learning and supervisory support for that learning of postgraduates researching in the field of education and relates to considering research carried out with PhD students and their supervisors. Like the larger projects, this research with students and supervisors in education builds on the underpinning theories of threshold concepts and the crossing of conceptual thresholds (Meyer, Land and Cousin et al 2006, Kiley and Wisker 2006, Wisker and Robinson 2006).

Students of education are frequently concerned with exploring notions and practices of student learning, their own practice, and on development or improvement of practice in context. In the process of conceptualising, designing, undertaking, interpreting data and drawing conclusions from their research, they are quite likely to meet challenges to received opinions and established working behaviours, and to experience moments of fundamental challenge to their ways of thinking and being in the world, as educational practitioners. This paper considers the ways in which several postgraduate students of higher education, as practitioners, have, with their supervisors identified such challenging moments, engaged or attempted to engage their work at a more conceptual level and have experienced both epistemological and ontological challenge and change as a result.

References: