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**Jocelyn Wishart** is a lecturer in education at the University of Bristol specialising in science teacher training. She first became an ITT tutor at Loughborough University in 1996 where she taught both PGCE Science (Physics) and PGCE ICT. Prior to that she taught Science, Psychology and ICT in secondary schools.



Her current research focuses on the use of mobile technologies to support teachers in training. Other research projects include developing an online resource for bioethics education and evaluating the use of online role play to teach safety on the Internet.

## Using Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) with Internet Access to Support Initial Teacher Training in the UK

Fourteen initial teacher training students studying to become science teachers have been given PDAs in a pilot study to assess whether PDAs have the potential to support them their own teaching and learning, and in their role as trainee teachers.

Initial use of the devices was high, we recorded many positive impressions and the devices were well used. Several applications, in particular the use of the calendar, task list, email and internet search facilities were found to be supportive by the teacher trainees to both their teaching and learning. Other successes were bespoke software programs to record attendance, grades and behaviour, to perform scientific calculations and to provide information from the periodic table of elements. At this point in the course the trainees were moving regularly between school - for observation and teaching practice and university - for subject teaching and reflective discussion sessions.

However, for nearly all the teacher trainees, use of their PDAs dropped during the main 12 week block of teaching practice when they are placed in schools full-time. Some trainees reported that under pressure of time and workload they are reverting to use of paper and pen to organise themselves and plan their teaching. Also some schools are unsupportive of the need to synchronize PDAs with a desktop PC to copy trainees' presentations and worksheets to the school network.

In this paper the authors will highlight sociocultural issues arising from the role of the initial teacher trainee and their school context and discuss how their situation impacts upon their freedom to explore how a PDA can support them as they develop as a teacher.