Use of Web Logs and other Tools to support Students’ use of Reflective Journals

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SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
Overview

• Background and context
• How we implemented the features
• Different approaches
• What next
Background and Context

- Discussion tools in VLP
- Blogs for u/grad and PGCE:
  - Community blog
  - Individual reflective blog
- Wiki
Overview of the VLP Discussion Forum

• Pros
  – Readily available – tools and access
  – Known environment
  – Protected
  – Within NTU environment
  – Notification of new entries

• Cons
  – Navigation
  – Bookmarking
  – Lack of features
  – Constrained to one module – default
  – Lack of ownership – personalisation and customisation
  – Cannot post via email
So what's a blog then...?

- A blog is a **user-generated** website where entries are made in **journal** style and usually displayed in a reverse **chronological order**.

**Pros**
- Can upload text, images, videos, sound
- Blog spaces are usually customisable.
- Individualised
- Bookmarkable
- Notification of new entries

**Cons**
- External to NTU
- Advertising – on LiveJournal
- Not a known environment
- Students have to register to create a ‘Community’ blog
Application of Blogs

• Where?
  – JHP – introduced to Year 1 pilot group
  – PGCE Secondary – ICT and English strands
  – BA Primary

• Why?
  – An alternative to reflective journals/diaries
  – Support work based placements
  – Higher order learning
  – Constructivist learning
  – Collaborative work
  – Students seem to enjoy it
  – Student engagement
Comparison: discussion board v blog

- PGCE Applied ICT
- BSc (hons) Business and ICT, year 2
Examples

- Discussion Board
- Pre-course discussion board

Choice of Blogging tool

- Blog
- Blog after changes
How to use the Blog

• Students need to register
• Give you access as a friend
• For Community blog – you need to ‘manage’ and give permission
  – Welcome message
  – ‘Rules’
  – Encourage personalising area
Success

- Difficult to gauge on u/grad course, but will be part of assessment
- Dependent on tutor’s attitude
- Much improved on 2nd placement – photos being used and customisation of site
- Coherence – sense of community – only works if students engage

Comments from students:

- Fantastic
- Very supportive on placement
- Don’t forget to post
Wiki

- What is a Wiki? – collaborative web page
- Which tool we chose and why
- Pros
  - Collaborative working
  - Version control
  - Tracking contributions
  - Attach documents
  - Simple to use and Intuitive
  - Permission control
  - Email when someone has contributed
  - Very easy to customise – gives more personal front end
  - Simple to set out information – very similar to MS packages
  - Simple to upload files, edit, delete, etc
  - People can work when it is convenient to them – flexible
- Cons
  - External to VLP
  - Not owned by us so could be taken down
  - Cannot contribute to the same page at the same time
  - Unknown environment
Wikis on PGCE ICT

- Students had to produce and deliver a lesson which included teaching resources
- Comments from last year’s group
- Each group chose to use the Wiki
- Access originally only for group members
- After presentation, all wikis were accessible to all students to edit
- Used the Wiki to teach their lesson – gave all students access to the resources

- Example
Wikis on BA Joint Honours Programme

- Collaborative task
- Why it worked
- What we would change

Example
Success?

• Students chose to use them
• Really enjoyed the experience
• Engagement
• Now using Wikis in their own teaching – so we are impacting in schools across the East Midlands ..... And beyond
Work in Progress: Futures

- Analysis of use on these PGCEs to be conducted at the end of the year
- Iterative – to inform practice for next year
- To disseminate to other PGCEs and programmes
- Staff development
- Informs VLE replacement project
Any Questions?