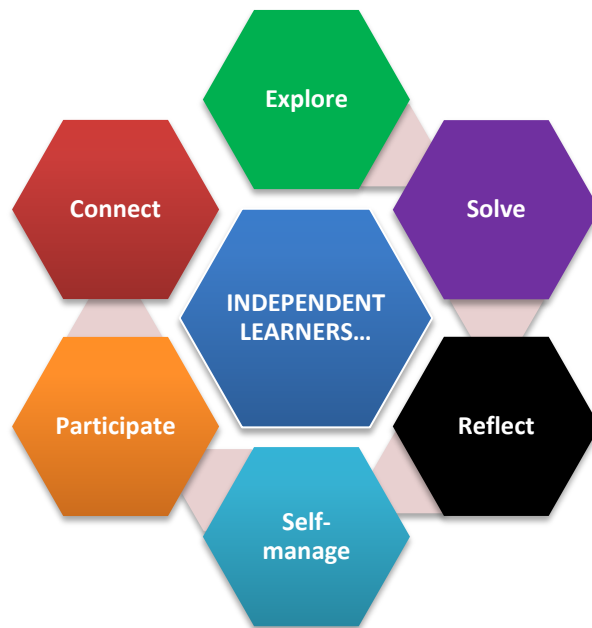


Making Meaningful Connections

What is the impact of using collaborative online tools on independent learning?



By

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LSIS Research Development Fellowship 2012/13



Abstract

How can we help students become more employable?

Can online tools support them in developing independent learning skills whilst working together?

Employers want staff who self-manage, are good communicators and can demonstrate team working skills (CBI, 2012) and teaching has evolved from the old model focused on passive learning (“Here is what you need to know”) to participative learning (“Let’s discuss what you found out”) as educators seek to help students develop these skills. This study explored how online tools can be used to facilitate student ownership of their learning, anticipating that ‘Net Generation’ students would engage with and use these tools.

10 teachers in UK schools and colleges were consulted. 41 part-time and full-time students on Higher Education (HE) business programmes (HNC/HND Diplomas and Foundation Degrees respectively) used the following websites:

- *Twitter* (www.twitter.com) - a social networking website
- *Wiggio* (www.wiggio.com) – a collaborative website

Use of these online tools was embedded into teaching and learning with these groups during the study. They did support students in developing the skills required to become an independent learner, where students engaged with them. Students of the ‘Net Generation’ are not equally skilled in the use of technology and pedagogical practice needs to take these issues into account if online tools are to be used effectively. For example, one student commented about Wiggio:

“It’s simply no match for a memory stick.”

(Year 1, full-time student)

Recommendations include using online tools consistently and with a clear purpose and the importance of reviewing and adapting how these tools are used in teaching and learning to suit different groups of students. The potential benefits from identifying students who can support others using online tools and developing independent study skills – referred to as ‘i-champions’ – have been considered.

The study showed that using online tools has made individual contributions to group assignments more visible, reinforcing the principle of accountability which is vital preparation for employment. It has also made it easier for students to collaborate.

“I have really enjoyed using Wiggio as I think it is user friendly. I think the way it is used to support studying is really good ... Now that I know about Wiggio, I will use it in the future.”

(Year 1, part-time student)

Students were generally positive in terms of the impact using these tools had upon their engagement with the subject and how they supported them in their studies. I feel that my own pedagogical practice will improve as a result of this study, with a more focused, consistent and creative approach to using online tools to support students in developing as independent learners and collaborating effectively.

Introduction

It is often difficult to get students to read around the subject, share ideas beyond the classroom environment, take ownership and get things done in group presentations and assessed tasks, and plan their time effectively to support themselves and their peers in completing assessed tasks to a high standard.

We need to develop students as independent learners who demonstrate that they are flexible, show initiative, are proactive and take ownership of their own learning, engage in critical thinking, solve problems, work effectively with others and reflect and improve.

This research took place in a college in the South of England between September 2012 and March 2013 with adult students (aged 18-50) on HE business programmes.

It was anticipated that introducing Twitter as part of teaching and learning with these students and providing them with access to dedicated Wiggio sites for group tasks and assessments would support and challenge them in developing these skills. For example, Wiggio was used to evidence and assess individual contributions to group assignments and encourage students to share ideas, peer assess and work together towards achieving a common goal (Appendix A).

The aims of this study were to:

- *Provide an environment in which students develop independent learning skills*
- *Use online tools to encourage students to collaborate and share ideas*
- *Identify benefits and barriers in using online tools for teaching and learning*

Literature Review

Richard Sennett points out that people who become skilled in their jobs take pride in their work and are adept at learning from their mistakes, identifying new ways of working and learning by doing (Sennett, 2008).

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) identified that 61% of employers were unsatisfied with the self-management skills of school/college leavers. Of particular concern is the fact that a quarter of employers reported concerns over the team working and problem solving skills of school/college leavers. The CBI notes that employers consider key employability skills to be a positive attitude combined with

self-management, team working, business and customer awareness, problem solving, communication and key literacy, numeracy and IT skills (CBI, 2012, p32).

In terms of skills employers are looking for, Knud Illeris concluded that these could be categorised as intellectual, perception, self-control, individuality, social and motivational (Illeris, 2007, p133). Lack of motivation can have a significant impact upon learning. It could be argued that poorly motivated students are less likely to be able to develop the skills and attributes sought by employers. If students lack motivation they are less likely to voluntarily engage with their peers on group tasks and may be reluctant to share their ideas, if they get around to doing the work at all.

Illeris argues that independent learners will be active participants in their own learning rather than taking a passive role and waiting for learning to be given to them, citing interaction as key to independent learning, with experience, imitation and participation all forms of interaction. Students need to gain experience by getting involved and learning from others so that *“the learner is not simply receiving, but also acts in order to benefit from the interaction.”* (Illeris, 2007, p100).

Chris Watkins categorises self-directed learners in terms of the abilities. At the basic level, those with a minimum level of self-direction are able to focus on a given task. Others can engage in self-direction with support and are able to initiate action, plan and review progress, while the best self-directed learners are able to identify appropriate resources, motivate others and make links between learning from various contexts (Watkins, 2011, p21).

Watkins also identifies four phases of effective learning, where students have to do, review, learn and apply and suggests that a range of activities - active learning, collaborative learning, learner responsibility and learning about learning - are necessary for effective learning to take place (Watkins, 2011, p26). For example, in collaborative learning students should be involved in doing (taking part in a group task), reviewing (sharing ideas and reflecting upon how the group worked together), learning (explaining the topic and sharing between themselves how the group functioned) and applying (considering ways in which they might work differently in future group tasks).

These link to my use of Wiggio to get students to work together, reflect and review. Wiggio was chosen as the online platform to facilitate and encourage collaboration between students, particularly on group assignments.

Illeris also notes that imitation, defined as *“where the learner attempts to do something in the same way as another person acting as a model, or in a goal-directed form, as an instructor”* plays a key role in developing as an independent learner (Illeris, 2007, p100). During the course of this study a range of Twitter tasks were used with students where they were required to follow the tutor’s lead. For example, students were asked during induction to tweet about their favourite

product, giving a reason for their choice. The 140 character limit imposed by Twitter on each tweet can help students develop concise writing skills.

Participation is defined as involving students in *“a common goal-directed activity”* (Illeris, 2007, p100) and *“learning is always embedded in a social and societal context that provides impulses and sets the frames for what can be learned and how”* (Illeris, 2007, p19). The interaction element of learning consists of ‘social learning’, ‘collaborative learning’ and ‘collective learning’. Illeris refers to ‘collaborative learning’ taking place where students cooperate and notes that this can be observed *“especially in connection with computer-supported learning approaches”*. ‘Collective learning’ is defined as *“a learning situation where the social situation contributes to them learning the same thing”* (Illeris, 2007, p121).

Illeris also argues that learning has four different meanings, ranging from the outcome of the learning process to mental processes, interaction processes and teaching. The focus of my research is on interaction processes of learning, defined as the *“interaction processes between individuals and their material and social environment”* (Illeris, 2007, p3).

By using online tools the aim was to engage students beyond the confines of the classroom and to support them in collaborating on group assessments. It was also hoped that students would be encouraged to actively participate and learn from their involvement, reflecting, adapting and improving over time.

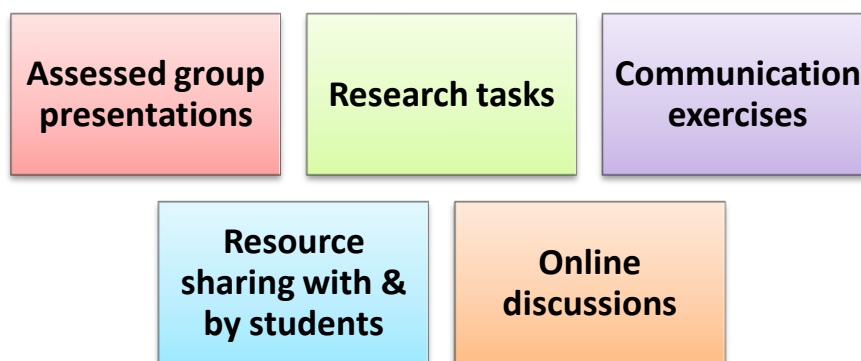
The digital age is *“opening up new potential for more enriched and immersive learning experiences”* (Sharpe, Beetham and De Freitas, 2010, p1). This is why I sought to explore using online tools to support teaching and learning in this research. The impact of the movement from traditional to non-traditional modes of learning is reflected in a move away from the traditional teacher-led learning to participative learning, including the generation of content by both teachers and learners (Sharpe, Beetham and De Freitas, 2010, p28). Using Twitter and Wiggio during this study was an attempt to explore the potential of online tools to support and engage students in their own learning and skills development.

Research Methodology

I believe that social technologies such as Twitter and Wiggio have the potential to provide effective learning tools for students. In particular, the advent of online environments where individuals or groups of individuals can work together to create and amend content, often referred to as Web2.0 technologies, provide an opportunity for *“collaborative knowledge building practices as we learn more about integrating Web 2.0 capabilities into the design of learning tasks”*. The challenge for teachers is to *“make the learning creative, challenging and open-ended”* to provide students with the potential to *“create and share knowledge in ways we can only imagine”* (Sharpe, Beetham and De Freitas, 2010, p11).

I introduced the two online tools to students during the induction period in September 2012. Separate pages (or communities) were set up within Wiggio for the four different groups, with all students registering online to become members of their respective group page. Wiggio was set up so that each group of students could see assignment deadlines (with reminders issued one week before the deadline), timetables and term dates (Appendix G). All students were also requested to set up a Twitter account during induction (given the option to use their existing account or set up a course specific one) and completed an initial Twitter task.

During the period of the research study I observed how the students in different groups were using these tools and problems experienced. I consulted with the students at regular interviews to identify and try to resolve with them issues faced (there were several with Wiggio, which will be covered later in this report) in using these websites. Before undertaking this research I also identified a number of ways in which Twitter could be used in teaching and learning (see Appendix F). These online tools were used to support teaching and learning in several ways, including:



I consulted with other teachers who use Twitter to find out their opinions on how Twitter has helped them and their students (Appendices B and C). I also issued a questionnaire to all of the students involved in this study asking them for feedback (Appendices D and E). Both of these questionnaires were available online as Google Forms and links were sent to these groups. It was made clear in the questionnaires that participation was entirely optional and voluntary. The results from both of these surveys were collated into separate spreadsheets for further review and analysis.

In terms of independent learning skills, I decided against asking the students outright in the questionnaire if they felt that using these online tools had improved or helped them to develop the independent learning skills identified earlier in this report as I did not think that they would be able to consider this objectively.

I expected the study to show that students valued Wiggio as a collaborative tool and was hoping to see that they thought Twitter has been useful for their studies.

Ethical considerations

In accordance with the British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines all participants in this research have been treated fairly, sensitively and with dignity (BERA, 2011). Students involved were informed during the induction to their programmes at the start of the academic year that they would be using Twitter and Wiggio as part of their studies; that this was going to be the subject of academic research; and that the outcomes of this research would be shared with students on these programmes, their lecturers and the wider educational community via a published report.

All participants in the study were made aware that the ideas, opinions and information disclosed may be used to support the research but that real (or Twitter) names would be not be disclosed to provide anonymity and ensure confidentiality.

It is important to note that all participants were informed from the outset that they could choose to withdraw from the research for any reason and participation in the surveys conducted was not compulsory.

Findings

Student responses to the questionnaire were split 60:40 between part-time and full-time students, providing a good balance of students with differing ages, experience and expectations.

Twitter

The teachers surveyed used Twitter to support teaching and learning in a number of ways: setting assignments; discussion; sharing resources (such as websites and videos); providing reminders; study tips; answering queries; and providing feedback (similar to the ideas in Appendix F). They felt that using Twitter had helped their students to develop their subject knowledge, social interaction, cooperation, independent learning and research skills.

35% of my students did not have a Twitter account and had no interest in using it before they started the programme, with only 20% used Twitter regularly. By the end of the study, 55% of students felt confident and 45% felt able to use Twitter.

While only 10% of students had interacted regularly with the HE business Twitter account (Appendix H) unprompted it is encouraging that 60% had engaged with it. Disappointingly though, 40% said they had not done so and were not interested in doing so either. Even though 45% of students felt that Twitter could not help them in their studies the majority agreed that using Twitter could help them demonstrate initiative (70%) and think critically (65%). Only 30% of students felt that using Twitter could help them develop their writing skills, with 25% unsure and 45% in disagreement. This suggests that students did engage with Twitter and benefitted from using it, even if few used it to communicate their ideas and opinions regularly.

“Twitter has been helpful at points when reviewing articles tweeted by the business page however the other communication methods such as Wiggio and My Course [VLE] have been more beneficial as these are specific to the course.”

(Year 1, part-time student)

This is intriguing as the Twitter articles shared are geared towards subject knowledge and getting students to read and develop critical thinking skills. Perhaps students found Wiggio more intuitive and practical.

“At times I forget to take a look at it maybe if we are set something weekly by the teacher that involves looking at the Twitter I would definitely use it more.”

(Year 1, part-time student)

“I think a few people are unsure of how to use Twitter and lack confidence, so if we were asked to complete more tasks via Twitter, students would become more confident and are more likely to use it... I would have liked to complete more tasks revolved around Twitter.”

(Year 1, part-time student)

“Twitter has had zero influence on my studies thus far but that's down to the nature of my course.”

(Year 1, full-time student)

“I see no point in it. The limited number of characters you can use makes effective communication difficult.”

(Year 2, full-time student)

These comments indicate that students need to be clear on the reason for undertaking activities and why that tool is being used for it. Purpose must be clear and Twitter must be used regularly and consistently to provide focus for students.

Wiggio

It is encouraging that 90% had used Wiggio, with 80% feeling that it helped them to work effectively with others and clarified individual contributions to group assignments. 70% felt that using Wiggio helped them to act upon and solve problems together. This suggests collaboration is being supported in the way intended and helping them develop independent learning skills.

“Sometimes [the VLE] falls over but Wiggio seems to be really strong and is a good communication tool”

(Year 1, part-time student)

"I have really enjoyed using Wiggio as I think it is user friendly. I think the way it is used to support studying is really good especially to share powerpoints and sound files etc. I think it would have been good to be shown how to use the virtual meeting and conference facilities as this may have lead more students to use this while completing group work. Now that I know about Wiggio, I will use it in the future."

(Year 1, part-time student)

"Good for group work"

(Year 2, part-time student)

"Was a little wary of Wiggio but I can see how it can be used I feel a little induction and maybe some example lessons to show the benefits of Wiggio."

(Year 2, full-time student)

"I think this site could be utilised more to get more discussions flowing between the pupils, not only for group assignments but for the individual assignments as well."

(Year 1, part-time student)

There were some problems experienced with Wiggio, notably in loading the website (depending upon the internet browser being used) and difficulties uploading some files, which impacted upon group assignments and sharing ideas.

"I know I have not used it to its full potential, but what I have used it for could just as easily been done via traditional e-mail."

(Year 1, part-time student)

"I feel this has not been fully utilised by the current pupils due to the technical difficulties faced with the site putting people off of using the site as much as they could."

(Year 1 part-time student)

"I think that it needs to be more reliable for students as sometimes the system doesn't show up new posts and doesn't log in quickly."

(Year 1, full-time student)

"Wiggio tries to do too many things, it's a little overwhelming and we don't really need it. It's simply no match for a memory stick."

(Year 1, full-time student)

If students *"make strategic choices about their use of digital applications and learning approaches"* (Sharpe, Beetham and De Freitas, 2010, p2) this could help explain the variation in usage and engagement with the online tools used within this

study. Illeris also argues that three dimensions of learning exist, content and incentive (both linked to the process of acquisition) and interaction (linked to social behaviour and society). Incentive refers to the motivation, emotion and volition of students and interaction to action, communication and cooperation. Illeris' key argument is that *"all learning involves these three dimensions, which must always be considered if an understanding or analysis of a learning situation is to be adequate"* (Illeris, 2007, p25). If this is the case, teachers need to ensure that we involve, stimulate and engage students if effective learning is to take place.

Conclusions

I set out to identify whether online tools can support students in developing independent learning skills whilst working together. Were the aims of the study met?

- *Provide an environment in which students develop independent learning skills*
- *Use online tools to encourage students to collaborate and share ideas*

Students engaged with these tools to varying degrees, with Wiggio used more than Twitter, and these have helped students to work together. Feedback was generally positive about these tools and some students have demonstrated problem solving, team working and research skills using these tools. However, it is clear that there is more to do to create and sustain online environments which encourage students to participate, reflect and share, in doing so improving their independent learning skills.

The contradictory nature of some students, ambivalent towards their chosen course of study (wanting to take part and not wanting to take part at the same time), is intriguing. 'Net Generation' students *"want an active rather than a passive learning environment, and because they participate in a highly interactive world, they expect the same from their classes, responding poorly to situations that don't fit this design"* (Sharpe, Beetham and De Freitas, 2010, p64-65). Online learning environments, tasks and activities must be well thought out and fit for purpose if they are to add any value to students and get students participating and engaged.

If today's HE students do *"want more outlets for their creativity and their collaborative nature"* (Sharpe, Beetham and De Freitas, 2010, p64-65) then online tools have the potential to provide this. My observations are that they have done so for some students during this study and can do so for both adults and younger students.

- *Identify benefits and barriers in using online tools for teaching and learning*

The majority of students used Wiggio to help them in group assignments, as intended, and feedback was very positive. Twitter has had some impact as a sharing tool from teacher to student but careful thought needs to be given to how to use this consistently and with purpose to support teaching and learning and student skills development. Interestingly, the teachers surveyed were positive about how Twitter

had helped their students develop and improve their skills but also experienced some lack of engagement with Twitter.

An Ipsos MORI poll conducted in 2008 showed that over half of UK undergraduates could see how social networking sites could be useful in developing their learning. Intriguingly, only a third thought that tutors should use these for teaching purposes and over a quarter were adamant that they should not do so (Sharpe, Beetham and De Freitas, 2010, p36-37). This could explain the reluctance of some students who clearly engage with social networks with their friends, family or colleagues to engage with Twitter as it has been used throughout this study.

The reluctance of some students to engage with these online tools appears to be due to a number of factors. Motivation to learn is low in some students. Some students had less access than others to mobile technology, which can make using online tools easier (even if only because they are more convenient and easy to access).

Peter Jarvis explored the concept of barriers to learning and uses the term 'non-learning'. Jarvis argues that 'non-learning' can be divided into three categories: presumption, non-consideration and rejection (Jarvis, 1987, p133). Illeris instead refers to the concepts of 'mis-learning', 'defence against learning' and 'resistance to learning' (Illeris, 2007, p158). More research needs to be done with the students on these programmes of study to identify the reasons for non-participation or engagement with these online tools and inform how use of these tools with students needs to change.

The findings from the student surveys suggest that more needs to be done to ensure students engage with these online tools (and do so regularly) to help them develop independent learning skills. From my observations, some students took pride in their work and in working collaboratively online but more needs to be done to encourage others to do so. It seems likely that the motivation and self-direction of students and collaboration among students should improve with a consistent, creative and engaging approach to using these tools (particularly Twitter).

Recommendations

It is clear from the student feedback and my observations for the duration of this research study that use of Twitter and Wiggio varied considerably within and between different groups of students. I will address these in turn.

Twitter use has been disappointing. Student engagement in discussions with the teacher and unprompted interaction with other students outside of College has been limited to a few students on each programme. However, 55% of students had used the articles and links shared by the teacher to think about business issues beyond the confines of the classroom and in researching their assignments.

Upon reflection, I would encourage students to set up a course specific account in future as some students commented that they didn't use Twitter as they didn't want their personal and/or commercial lives and conversations to become confused with their College studies.

Wiggio was used by more students and the way this was embedded into assessment practice and teaching and learning activities appears to have had a significant impact upon student engagement with this particular online tool.

There is a lesson here for the use of Twitter. In the first few weeks I used Twitter with students as part of teaching and learning fairly regularly but despite some innovative uses of Twitter (Appendices I, J and K) there was an inconsistent approach to using this with students. I relied too heavily upon students taking the time to read the tweets from the HE Business Twitter account (Appendix H) and choosing to respond to these or share news stories and opinions readily using course specific hash tags (#), which were shared with them at the start of the year and were reinforced in tweets sent out from the HE Business Twitter account at regular intervals.

The way I used Twitter with students mirrored the uses suggested by Mollett, Moran and Dunleavy. They suggested setting up a course specific account, using tweets to give advice on tasks and reading, and answer student questions. They also argue that Twitter should be used to "*Congratulate people who do good presentations or make good progress*" (Mollett, Moran and Dunleavy, 2011, p9). My experience with Twitter this year suggests that this approach might work but it is important to be sensitive to the students' personalities as not all would appreciate such public praise.

"I do not like the way that information is so immediately public and am worried about hacking and not information being used in the wrong way/context."

(Year 1, part-time student)

Although this was covered during induction more thought needs to be given to reassuring students and guiding them in online activity.

Student feedback and observations lead me to my first recommendation:

- 1. Ensure that there is a clear purpose for using online tools – this should be shared with students at the start of the programme of study and reinforced through teaching and learning activities consistent with this aim*

It is important not to be discouraged if students don't immediately engage with online tools and to reflect upon the reasons for using these tools, sharing this with the students and referring back to this as teaching and learning activities are introduced and undertaken.

- 2. Conduct initial assessments of students' online skills – creating specific online tasks and activities during the induction/early stages of the programme of study to assess individual students' ability to use a range of tools and identify students who could act as 'i-champions'*

The term 'i-champions' does not refer solely to the ability to use online tools effectively (the 'i' could be assumed to stand for internet) but also independence. As the programme of study progresses students nominated as 'i-champions' could be used to support the teacher in embedding the use of online tools in teaching and learning activities both within and outside of the classroom, acting as mentors or guides to students struggling to use these tools effectively to support their studies.

It is also important to encourage student input on how these tools could be better used to support them in their studies. Teachers need to observe how frequently students use the online tools chosen, identify barriers to their use and reflect upon this to find alternative ways to achieve the chosen goal(s). This leads to my third recommendation:

- 3. Regularly review student use of online tools, adapting activities as appropriate*

The same activities won't always work with different groups. Consulting with students to find a better way to use these tools will encourage them to collaborate to find a solution and hopefully engage them as they take ownership of and help resolve the problem(s). If students are reluctant to get involved in this process then through observation the teacher can ascertain student skills, values and experience, identifying strategies and making appropriate adjustments to activities so they are more likely to work with that group of students.

Finally, it is important to be consistent in the way we use online tools for teaching and learning:

- 4. Use online tools with students regularly*

Students need time to get used to new technologies. They do not all have the same access to mobile technologies, which can make it easier for students to log in, review and use online tools at a time convenient to them. For example, during the study it was observed that students with iPhones liked the Wiggio app and found it easy to use. The way online tools are used needs to be sensitive to differing levels of access to technology among students.

It is important that the momentum gained from initial focus on these tools during the induction period and early stages of the programme of study is not lost. Where students fail to engage with and use these tools teachers should identify possible reasons for this (as per recommendation 3) and persevere. As we ask our students to be reflective practitioners so must we. Reflect, adapt and improve.

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The content of this project does not necessarily reflect the views of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service or the University of Sunderland.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Assessment criteria for students included peer review and critical reflection upon individual and group contribution, problem resolution and learning points

INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION EVALUATION FORM

As part of the assessment of your group presentation each student is required to complete a review of the presentation.

Each student must **evaluate** the following in the table below:

- Your own contribution to the group presentation
- How well you worked together as a group to complete the presentation
- Any problems experienced and steps you took to resolve them
- Lessons learned from this group task
- Actions you plan to take and why to improve future presentations

This must be word processed and submitted as part of your assignment for marking and will form part of your assessment for this unit. You are not limited to the text the boxes below will allow and are encouraged to write as much as you can to show reflection and evaluation of your own and other's presentations and the unit content covered within these.

Issue	Evaluation
Own contribution to group presentation	
How well you worked together as a group	
Problems experienced working as a group and actions you took to resolve them	
Lessons learned from this group task	
Actions you plan to take and why to improve future presentations	

Appendix B

Using Twitter With Students

As part of my LSIS Research Development Scholarship in 2012/13 I am investigating the use of Twitter with students. Thank you for taking the time to complete this short questionnaire. It should take you no more than 10 minutes to complete. Your answers will be treated with complete confidentiality and will be anonymous.

Please complete the survey before 18 March 2013.

Many thanks,

Graham Carter
Business Lecturer & Advanced Practitioner
Highbury College Portsmouth

Do you use Twitter with your students? *

Yes

No

How have you used Twitter with your students? *

How have your students reacted to the use of Twitter to support teaching and learning? *

Most of them have engaged with it

Some of them have engaged with it

Few of them have engaged with it

What skills (if any) do you believe students can develop from engaging with Twitter as part of their studies? *

To what extent do you believe the use of Twitter has improved students' independent learning skills? *

Significant improvement

Some improvement

Little improvement

Appendix C

Results from teacher questionnaires

Do you use Twitter with your students?

Yes	100%
No	0%

How have your students reacted to the use of Twitter to support teaching and learning?

Most of them engaged with it	67%
Some of them engaged with it	33%
Few of them engaged with it	0%

To what extent do you believe the use of Twitter has improved students' independent learning skills?

Significant improvement	67%
Some improvement	33%
Little improvement	0%

What skills (if any) do you believe students can develop from engaging with Twitter as part of their studies?

Responses covered independent learning, cooperation, research skills, interaction/social skills, wider contextual knowledge, motivation, and deep seated learning.

"...even if only 1 person reads my tweets it would be worth it."

(Economics teacher)

Appendix D

Have Twitter and Wiggio Helped You In Your Studies?

As part of my LSIS Research Development Scholarship in 2012/13 I have been researching the effect upon your studies and skills development of using Twitter and Wiggio.

This questionnaire aims to find out what you think about Twitter and Wiggio and how they have been used to support your studies this year. Your answers will help me to identify possible improvements to make the student experience even better in 2013/14.

You are not obliged to complete this questionnaire but I would value your feedback.

All responses are confidential and will be entirely anonymous. If your comments are referred to within my LSIS report and poster then they will be anonymised and pseudonyms will be used.

Please only complete the questionnaire once.

Responses should be submitted before 18 March 2013.

Many thanks.

Graham Carter
Business Lecturer & Advanced Practitioner
Highbury College Portsmouth

Which course are you on? *

- Full Time (Foundation Degree)
- Part Time (HNC/HND)

Which stage of your studies are you in? *

- Year 1
- Year 2

Did you have a Twitter account before you started your Higher Education business course at Highbury College? *

- Yes - I used it regularly
- Yes - I used it sometimes
- Yes - I didn't really use it though
- No - I wondered what it was all about though
- No - I had no interest in using it

Have you used any of the news stories tweeted to help you with assignments or to read around a topic/issue? *

- Yes
- No

How often do you review the tweets sent to all business students? *

- Daily
- Weekly
- Less often
- Never

How confident do you feel about using Twitter? *

- I know what I'm doing
- It's a little confusing but I can use it
- I haven't a clue what to do

Have you tweeted the business account (except when asked to as a teaching activity)? *

- Yes - quite a few times
- Yes - once or twice
- No - I would but I'm not sure how to
- No - I'm not interested in doing so either

How do you think Twitter could help you in your studies? *

	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
Using my initiative to identify and share new stories	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helping me to think critically about business issues and news stories	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helps me to see how real businesses use Twitter to engage with their customers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tweeting helps me to be more concise and develop clear arguments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have any suggestions for how Twitter could be used differently to support you in your studies? *

How often have you used Wiggio this year? *

- I've used it whenever I've been told to
- I've used it when working on group assignments to share information with others in my group
- I haven't really used it

Do you think that Wiggio makes it easier to work together on group assignments? *

	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
Work effectively with others on group assignments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Take ownership of issues and resolve them together on group assignments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify individual contribution to group assignments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have any suggestions for how Wiggio could be used differently to support you in your studies? *

Appendix E

Results from student questionnaires

60% of respondents were part-time students (split 60:40 between Year 1 and Year 2)
 40% of respondents were full-time students (split 75:25 between Year 1 and Year 2)

Twitter

Did you have a Twitter account before you started your Higher Education business course at Highbury College?

Yes - I used it regularly	20%
Yes - I used it sometimes	10%
Yes - I didn't really use it though	10%
No - I wondered what it was all about though	25%
No - I had no interest in using it	35%

Have you used any of the news stories tweeted to help you with assignments or to read around a topic/issue?

Yes	55%
No	45%

How often do you review the tweets sent to all business students?

Weekly	25%
Daily	20%
Less often	55%

How confident do you feel about using Twitter?

It's a little confusing but I can use it	45%
I know what I'm doing	55%
I haven't a clue what to do	0%

Have you tweeted the business account (except when asked to as a teaching activity)?

Yes - quite a few times	10%
Yes - once or twice	50%
No - I would but I'm not sure how to	0%
No - I'm not interested in doing so either	40%

How do you think Twitter could help you in your studies?

Using my initiative to identify and share new stories

Agree	70%
Disagree	20%
Not sure	10%

Helping me to think critically about business issues and news stories

Agree	65%
Disagree	25%
Not sure	10%

Helps me to see how real businesses use Twitter to engage with their customers

Agree	85%
Disagree	0%
Not sure	15%

Tweeting helps me to be more concise and develop clear arguments

Agree	30%
Disagree	45%
Not sure	25%

Do you have any suggestions for how Twitter could be used differently to support you in your studies?

Suggestions made were to develop links with other colleges, set regular tasks outside of lessons based around Twitter for completion, and use pictures in tweets to improve the appeal and engage more students.

Wiggio

How often have you used Wiggio this year?

I've used it whenever I've been told to	25%
I've used it when working on group assignments to share information with others in my group	65%
I haven't really used it	10%

Do you think that Wiggio makes it easier to work together on group assignments?

Work effectively with others on group assignments

Agree	80%
Disagree	15%
Not sure	5%

Take ownership of issues and resolve them together on group assignments

Agree	70%
Disagree	10%
Not sure	20%

Identify individual contribution to group assignments

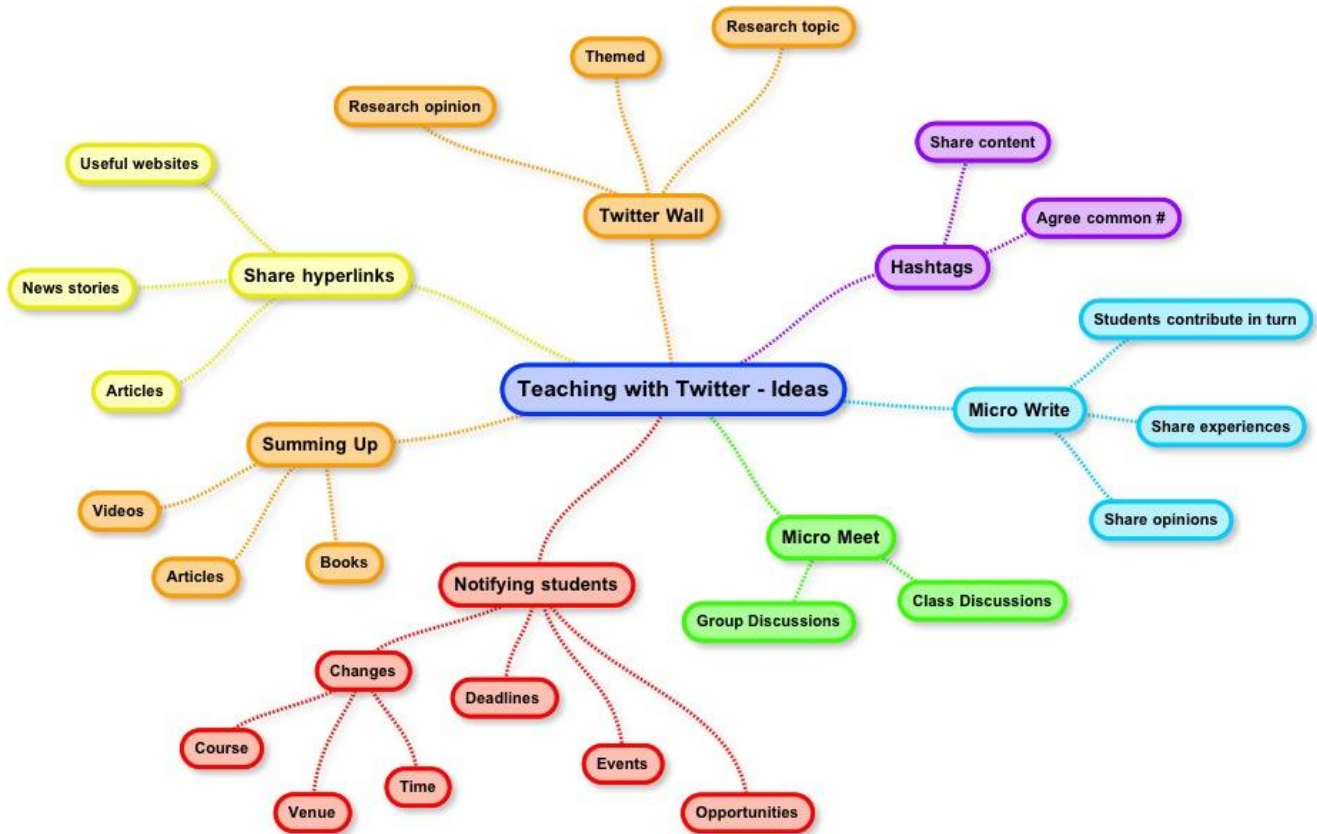
Agree	80%
Disagree	10%
Not sure	10%

Do you have any suggestions for how Wiggio could be used differently to support you in your studies?

Suggestions made were to provide a clear induction to using Wiggio with example lessons, using the facilities to get discussions going between students around individual as well as group assignments, and exploring the virtual meeting and conference facilities and how they could support group work.

Appendix F

Ideas for using Twitter to support teaching and learning identified before the study began. Not all of these were used during the research study.



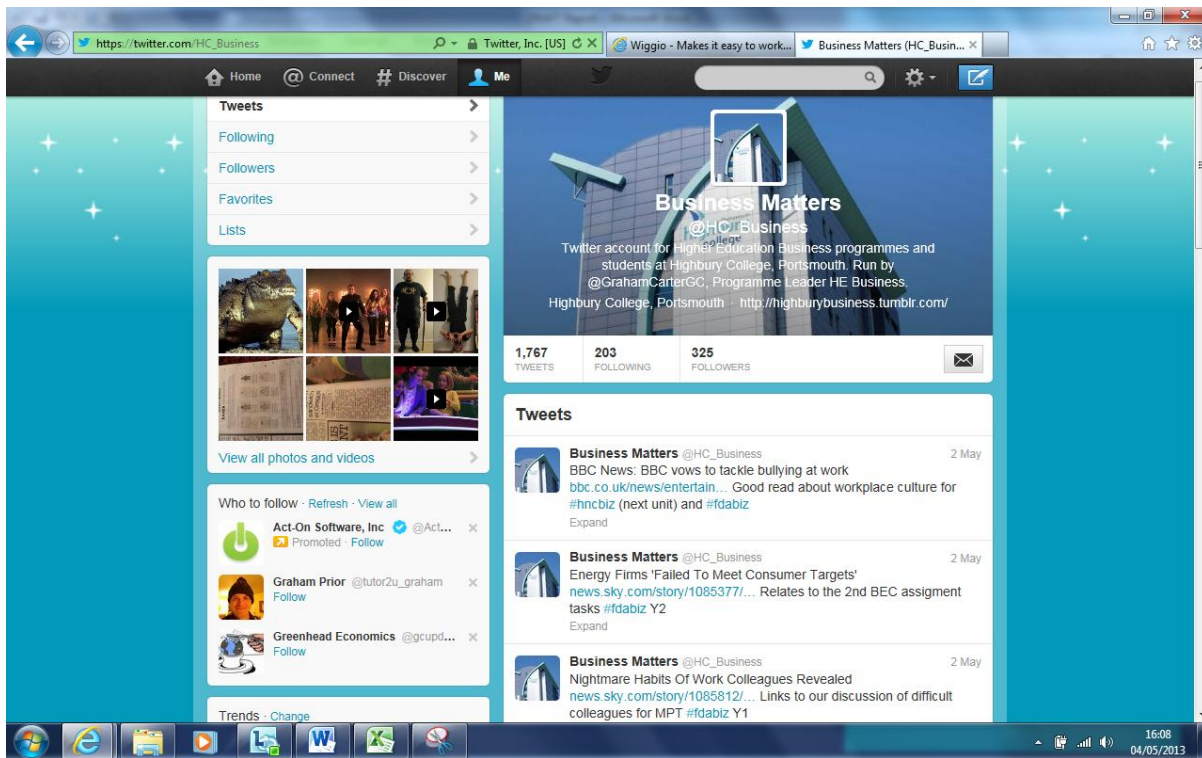
Appendix G

This is an example of how the Calendar facility in Wiggo was used to provide students with class times and dates, plus assignment deadlines and reminders.

Switch to agenda view		<< May 2013 >>					Options ▼
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
2013 April 28	29	30	2013 May 1	2	3	4	
		9:30a HRM 9:30a HRM Human 1:15p CM	9:30a INT1 Internst 1:30p FIN Business	10a PPD2 Persona 1:30p MPT Managir 4:30p Tutorial			
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
		9:30a HRM 9:30a HRM Human 1:15p CM	9:30a INT1 Internst 1:30p FIN Business	10a PPD2 Persona 1:30p MPT Managir 4:30p Tutorial			
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
		9:30a HRM 9:30a HRM Human 1:15p CM	9:30a INT1 Internst 1:30p FIN Business	PPD2 Assignment MPT Assignment C 10a PPD2 Persona 1:30p MPT Managir 4:30p Tutorial			
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
		CM Assignment De 9:30a HRM 9:30a HRM Human 1:15p CM	FIN Assignment 2 9:30a INT1 Internst 1:30p FIN Business	10a PPD2 Persona 1:30p MPT Managir 4:30p Tutorial			
26	27	28	29	30	31	2013 June 1	
Half Term							
		9:30a HRM 9:30a HRM Human 1:15p CM	9:30a INT1 Internst 1:30p FIN Business	10a PPD2 Persona 1:30p MPT Managir 4:30p Tutorial			

Appendix H

This is a screen shot of the Twitter account set up and used with my HE Business students. The most recent tweets provide examples of how I have shared news stories with specific student groups by using hash tags (#). For example, the bullying at work story is relevant for units in the HNC Diploma in Business and Foundation Degree in Business Management programmes so this is highlighted to these groups by the use of the #hncbiz and #fdabiz hash tags respectively.



Appendix I

A communication task set using Twitter, designed to develop students' ability to share a clear message concisely and appropriately with the target audience.

Communicating a difficult message to customers

In March 2012, I paid £16 to enter the New Forest 10 (a 10k run). The event was due to take place on Sunday 8 July. At the New Forest 10 they also have a family fun day, with fairground rides, bouncy castles and more. I was due to meet up with some running friends to do this and we had been looking forward to meeting up and having a good day out.

On Saturday 7 July, after several days of bad weather and significant rainfall, the organisers announced that the race was cancelled. They shared this information via their own website and local radio stations also picked up on it and broadcast the news. Later in the day I received an email confirming the race was cancelled due to bad weather.

I and my fellow runners were disappointed, to say the least, that the event we'd been looking forward to for months had been cancelled at the last minute. A few days after the event I received an email from the race organisers with the following message attached, confirming the reasons for the cancellation and that no refund would be received:



Message from the Race Director

As you are aware we had to cancel the above race at very short notice due to the conditions caused by the extreme weather experienced across the whole of the South of England. Our main concern was the safety of the runners; we also had secondary concerns about the car parking and the use of the field which traditionally houses all the supplementary activities, food, children's entertainment, massage, sports shops etc.

Please accept the apologies of all involved in organising this event.

I would like to give an overview of the events that lead to the cancellation at such short notice.

Wednesday 4th July @ 18:00: After torrential downpour at New Park, I received a call from the manager of New Park, asking us to consider cancelling the event. The NF10 committee had a telephone conference call and decided that we would meet on site the next day.

Thursday 5th July @ 1930: The committee met the manager and head grounds man of New Park and after a superb sunny day and with the available weather forecasts; we decided that the event would go ahead.

Saturday 7th July @ 0900: After 28 hours of consistent heavy rain, the committee, in conjunction with the managers of New Park, decided to cancel the event.

Saturday 7th July @ 11:00: Mass mail and phone calls to all entrants. Announcements on local radio stations. Banners on websites.

Sunday 8th July 0800-1130: Marshals on duty at New Park to turn away the 30 competitors who were not reached in time.

Our concerns for the safety of the competitors were borne out. Two of the thirty runners who turned up on the Sunday decided to run the course – at their own risk. Both, experienced cross country runners and having run the course previously, stated that it would not have been suitable for less experienced cross country runners. The ford, that is normally dry, was thirty feet wide and thigh deep and generally the going was 'soft'. The narrow tracks would have become treacherous after the best part of 1000 competitors went over them.

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The ethos of the race, since its inception some 29 years ago, is to put on a good race for runners, by runners. We have also included the supporters and families of the runners in this. That is why, normally we have some 800 cars/campers/coaches and about 2000+ people turn up for the main event, fun runs and family entertainment.

This event is over 9 months in the planning and we have to commit to the payment of all of the facilities long before we receive the entrance money. Among the financial commitments that we still have to honour are:-

This event is over 9 months in the planning and we have to commit to the payment of all of the facilities long before we receive the entrance money. Among the financial commitments that we still have to honour are:-

- St John's Ambulance
- Chip timing
- PA and finish gantry
- Marquees
- Road closures
- Portaloos
- 1000 x specially struck horse brasses – each carries the date of the event
- Prizes for the winners - each carries the date of the event

- Mini bus hire – to carry the marshals round the course

This is a non-profit making event, with the small surplus going to the local charities that support the event. We are unable to re stage the event this year and we regret that we are unable to offer a refund due to the financial commitment that we still have to honour.

Once again please accept the sincere apologies of the committee for any inconvenience or disappointment you may have been caused. Also, please recognise the fact that we really had no choice in this. The safety of our entrants is paramount.

Looking forward to a drier 2013.

Yours sincerely

Clive Nightingale
Race Director – New Forest '10'.

TASK

Compose a series of tweets in your own words (less than 140 characters) in which you share the following messages with sensitivity for the entrants:

Tweet 1 (3 days before the race) – weather warnings may affect race, keeping watch

Tweet 2 (day before race) – checking with health & safety to see if event can go ahead

Tweet 3 (day before race) – bad news, race cancelled

Tweet 4 (day before race) – reminder if you missed it, race cancelled

Tweet 5 (day of race) – race cancelled, don't come

Tweet 6 (day of race) – updates regarding cancellation and refunds will follow on Monday

All tweets to start with @HC_Business then leave a space and add the message. End each tweet with #hncbiznf10 – for example:

@HC_Business Tough luck runners. NF10 cancelled. Rain, didn't go away
#hncbiznf10

Obviously, this is a very bad example!!

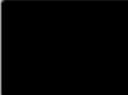

Appendix J

During the induction period I asked the Year 2 students to use Twitter to comment and share with the Year 1 students their top tips for success. This proved a useful way of reinforcing the points I raised with the new (Year 1) students. Names have been removed to preserve anonymity.

Top tips for Foundation Degree students 2012/13


Year 2 #fdabiz students share their experience with Year 1 students

 @HC_Business My top tip for Y1 #fdabiz students is.. make multiple copies of your assignments! eg, memory stick, skydrive. #toptips #havefun
 3 months ago

 @HC_Business my to tip for #fdabiz Y1 student is do full concentrate in all of lessons
 3 months ago

 @HC_Business Mt top tip for #fdabiz students is... keep on top of notes in classes.
 3 months ago

 @hc_Business my top tip for #fdabiz Yr1 students is Do lots of research and reference it properly.
 retweet ☆ Favorite 3 months ago

 @HC_Bussines My Top Tip for #fdabiz Y1 Students is to read more books that are relative to the subject you are studying
 3 months ago

Appendix K

Students were asked to mystery shop a company of their choice. They were required to produce a brief report on their experience and to share this with their peers. The tutor asked the companies concerned (via Twitter) if they wanted to know the outcome. Tesco requested and responded positively to the feedback from one student, asking for the full report and passing it onto the Store Manager.

Mystery Shopper Exercise

Foundation Degree Business Management students

Review of Mystery Shopping Visits from 3/10/2012

Each student has been asked to prepare a 5 minute presentation sharing the outcome of their mystery shopping exercise and recommendations

Completed Mystery Shop Questionnaires to be uploaded to the **CSQM Mystery Shopper Visits folder** within the **FdA Business Year 1** page on wiggio

Present your findings and recommendations to the group

What advice would you give the senior management team of your chosen organisation?

For each presentation observed you must do the following:

- Propose **one** more action the business concerned could take to improve the customer experience
- Suggest **one** way in which the mystery shopping questionnaire could be improved