

Enhancing Learner Progression 2 Newsletter



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University of Bradford, University of Leeds, LeedsMet University

Supporting Access Students with Social Software

As part of the Access to Higher Education course, students were provided with online areas within Ning to receive tutor support and enter into group discussion focussed on the creation of a key assignment. The key findings of the activity highlighted include;

- The impact of 'artificial groupings' on the students' usage of the collaborative areas
- The institutional support required by tutors to embed this type of activity within learning.

Internet Basics for Parents

As more and more households access broadband internet and buy laptops, we feel there is a gap in the skills of many parents in what to do next. Parents are keen to support their children in using the Internet but often lack the confidence and knowledge to do this effectively. We have been running training sessions

as part of the local extended schools networks on basic Internet use for parents. We have produced an 8 page guide to go with the training that covers the basics of using the internet, emailing and being safe online. The guide can be found on our website.

Lifelong Learning Lessons

- Nature and role of e-support in informal learning and networking.
- Transfer of control from tutor to learner.
- Ability of participants and others to develop informal networks, create shared resources & build communities capacity to support lifelong learning.



Recent Presentations

- LeedsMet ALT day, 4th Sept
- "Isn't it lovely to have a lovely online space to engage in learning", ALT-C, 11th Sept
- "Digital Reflection: creating a mess!" ALT-C, 11th Sept
- "A trip down memory lane", MLearn, 8th Oct

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Mums and the Internet - a Personal Story



For many adults and parents who have not been in formal education recently, the Internet can be a scary and difficult place. People don't understand how the software and web based tools work and they are not always aware of the information and opportunities afforded. This personal story is from a mum who is keen to learn how to use computers and the Internet to help her children. She took part on a six week course aimed at introducing the basic of computing and the Internet.

"I realise I've got to catch up with the times."

Since leaving school, Sofia (not real name) had never really used computers. Now in her twenties by her own admission, she had forgotten nearly everything they did about computers at school and the aspects related to the Internet would have been woefully out of date now anyway. "I actually did a BTEC in computing. Now I don't know a single thing about it."

The biggest barrier was confidence, "Having the confidence now to go on the computer.

Actually being able to use it. There is no way before I could do what we have been doing now." That confidence builds resilience so that when she "gets stuck."

"Before, I would just give up completely. Now I will try and find out what is actually happening with the computer... and go into the tools and help, which I wouldn't have done."

There was a sense from Sofia and her group that in not being able to use e-mail they were missing out. "I realise now that I do need to be [online] because like emails you realise how quick it is corresponding with anybody and I feel quite stupid when somebody says give me your email address and I say I haven't got one. That is what I think spurred me on, I realise I've got to catch up with the times." But at the start, actually using email would have been "nearly impossible. I wouldn't know where to start."

There were many reasons for not having got to grips with the Internet and computers but it mostly boiled down to time. "There were too many other things going on in my life. It's harder when you've got children."

Social networking was not seen as important to Sofia although she knows that having a basic understanding of it will help because her children will be using it. So Sofia's concern was around keeping her children safe in such online environments. Having just a few basic tips and advice has really helped.

In just six weeks of basic training, Sofia says "I have actually now got the confidence to do it myself." So hopefully, Sofia can benefit long into the future and so can her whole family.



Barbra's Story

Barbra is 56 and recently enrolled on an internet safety course for foster carers at the University of Leeds. Before she started the course Barbra's use of the internet was limited to shopping and booking holidays, using MSN and occasionally using the web to find out more about a subject or to help the children with their homework. Like the majority of carers who attended the course she knew nothing about internet safety and very little about social networking.

Barbra noted that there was a problem amongst her age group particularly when it came to making sure the Internet was safe. She noted that her generation weren't as clever as the kids. She believed they knew a lot more about computers than the carers. Now, as every child in care was being provided with a laptop, she believed that it was time that she learnt a lot more about internet safety and had a better idea of what kids were up to.

The safety issues discussed on the course provided Barbra with the confidence she needed to be able to control and monitor the children's usage of the internet. "I was shocked!" she said "at the types of things that can go on and the types of things that we didn't know!" Barbra now feels more confident at using the tools on the computer to control and monitor what the children are looking at. "I can keep an eye on them now!"

Part of the course involved joining a social network to access

materials and to interact with the tutor and other students. Barbra found this very useful. "It was great because we had a common place to go and this made communication really easy."

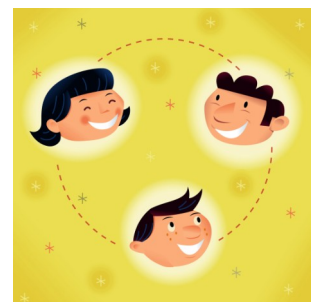
Barbra found that by using the social network to support her learning she had easy access to the course materials and was able to contact the other members of the group and ask the tutor questions with relative ease. She felt it was important to have face to face contact but acknowledged that "You need to click on things as well to learn for yourself, as well as, having a tutor." She felt that physical contact was important and noted "how do you know if what you're working out for yourself is right? You need to have both! Something to use at home and someone to guide you in the right direction."

As well as the learning aspects of using social networking, she felt that there was a strong social side as well "Sometimes as a carer you feel frustrated and need a place to sound off. This site was brilliant for that as we were able to have direct access to each other." She also felt that the group bonded more at sessions as they were able to share photographs of their families within a password protected area.

Finding out more about computers in general was a revelation for Barbra. "One of the best things for me about this course," exclaimed Barbra, "was finding out about memory sticks! I'd never heard about them before! Now I've got two!"



"It was great because we had a common place to go and this made communication really easy."



Transferring ILPs to ePs – A Way Forward

The implementation of Electronic Individual Learning Plans (e-ILPs) has been immensely complicated. Education authorities in the project's area have developed their own systems which vary widely between each other and the systems we are using in our HE partner institutions. The importance of actually getting these systems working and in place for 2008 had meant that transfer and interoperability

between schools / college and HE has been a low priority. The most obvious way forward, in the short term, would be to continue the work of the original ELP project and use the HE e-portfolio system with school / college based students as a transition tool. So students will have used the HE e-portfolio to work on transitional activities and be familiar with HE systems upon arrival.

Ning Guide

A guide to using Ning is currently being created as part of the project. Staff at Wakefield College and Calderdale Connexions Service are piloting the use of Ning. To enable them to create online groups, staff attended a training session and are currently providing feedback on the materials produced. It is intended that when completed the guide will direct staff in the technological and pedagogical use of the software.



ELP 2 YouTube Channel Launch

The project has created a channel on You Tube to disseminate the findings of the project and share materials. You can view:

- a video recording of a mature students thoughts about social networking.
- a presentation about the use of a blogging tool to support the medical widening participation conference
- some of the online materials created for the internet safety course

View the channel at <http://uk.youtube.com/user/JISCelp2>

Enhancing Learner Progression through Personalised Learning Environments (ELP2) project

Project Director: Professor Peter Hartley
Project Manager: Carol Higgison
Project Officers: Christopher Murray & Neil Currant
Leeds lead: Andy Pellow
LeedsMet lead: Jill Taylor

ELP 2 is a [JISC](#) funded project which continues the work in ELP and extends it beyond; using a wider range of learners and a wider range of online learning tools which focus on social networking.

ELP2 will investigate and identify solutions to the issues and challenges that arise in providing a personalised learning experience which meets the needs of individual learners in a range of settings in their lifelong learning journey. The project will explore these issues through the implementation of e-Portfolios, web logs (blogs) and other social software to support widening participation and developing skills essential to successful lifelong learning.

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