

# **An evaluation of Blogs as an Effective Space for Student Collaborative Learning**

**A Case Study of UK Higher Education**

**Elaine Garcia, Mel Brown & Ibrahim Elbetagi**

## **Outline**

- Collaborative Learning
- Collaborative Learning in the context of blogs
- Case Study and Methodology
- Findings & Discussion
- Conclusions & Recommendations

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# **COLLABORATIVE LEARNING**

## **Collaborative Learning**

- **Learner-centric approach**
  - Students work best when in groups & cooperating
  - Discussion leads to understanding and knowledge
- **Not just learning in small groups**
  - Collaborative activities – students create shared meaning
  - Cooperative activities – students share workload of the task
- **Students are responsible for their own learning and for the learning of their peers**

## **Aspects of Collaborative Learning**

- **Positive Interdependence**
  - Students rely on each other to achieve and learn
  - Can be goal, reward, role and resource interdependence
  
- **Face-to-Face promotive interaction**
  - Students meet to discuss and encourage each other
  - Act as a reference group for each other
  - Activities can include: providing feedback, exchanging resources, encouraging each other

## **Aspects of Collaborative Learning**

- **Individual accountability**
  - Students should know what they have to do and will not be “carried” by other members of the group
  - Progress of individuals should be known by full group
- **Interpersonal and Collaborative Skills**
  - Students should be encouraged to use and develop social skills
  - Skills are needed to work collaboratively effectively

## **Aspects of Collaborative Learning**

- **Group Processing**
  - Students should reflect on how well the group is working
  - Review and Reflection
  - Identify Changes to make them more effective in the future
  - More invested students = more encouraging and motivating

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# **COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AND BLOGS**



## **Blogs and Collaborative Learning**

- **Positive Interdependence**
  - Writing posts – provokes debate
  - Asking questions or requiring feedback
  - Providing feedback on posts via comments
  - Responding to feedback via other peoples comments
  
  - **Face-to-Face promotive interaction**
  - Not necessarily face-to-face but mediated
  - Occurs through posts, comments, feedback
  - May be more productive due to technology

## **Blogs and Collaborative Learning**

- **Individual Accountability**
  - Individual posts and comments are attributable (settings determine)
  - Analytics can be collected
  - Contribution can be seen by everyone in team
  - Participation can be active, reactive or continuity (Persico, Pozzi & Sarti, 2010)
- **Interpersonal and Collaborative Skills**
  - The same types of skills as previously seen still apply but additionally digital literacy

## **Blogs and Collaborative Learning**

- **Group Processing**
  - Asynchronous communication: enables reflection and communication
  - Convenience – Any time, any place
  
- **Issues / Challenges**
  - Students may not engage
  - Dependent upon technology and collaboration amongst group
  - Students must be able to use tools effectively
  - Not all students may work well in this environment
  - Technology may raise barriers for use for some students
  - Asynchronous nature of blogging may slow progress and prevent timely feedback

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# **CASE STUDY**

## Case Study

- Plymouth College of Art, UK
- BA (Hons) Illustration – 3 yr under graduate degree
- Use Collective Blogs in second year of programme
- Project entitled “competitive spirit”
- Game called – The Great Editorial Race
- Runs for 3 weeks in Autumn Semester
- Teams are formed and are an Editorial Illustration team who compete with other teams to win jobs
- Each Team needs to assign a captain and setup a team blog

STARTERS

**Prue Leith**  
My greatest fear?  
Senility. My mother and  
grandmother both  
went off with the fairies



Prue Leith, 72, was born in South Africa. In the early 1960s, she moved to London where she set up a catering firm; she went on to open Leith's Restaurant and Leith's School of Food And Wine, and to write 12 cookbooks. In 1995 she began writing fiction and has published five novels, the latest being *A Serving Of Scandal*. Her new memoir is called *Relish: My Life On A Plate*. She is a judge on *BBC2's Great British Menu*.

**When were you happiest?**

In my 40s: I had two children young enough to think their parents wonderful, my business was booming, I was happily married and living in the Cotswolds with a veg garden and ponies in the paddock. Who could not be happy?

**What is your greatest fear?**

Senility - my mother and grandmother both went off with the fairies in their old age.

**What is your earliest memory?**

My brother James's birth. I was six and having an operation for an infected ear on the dining room table while mama had him in the bedroom.

**Which living person do you most admire, and why?**

Desmond Tutu. If there is a God, He must find his Cape Town archbishop a big relief from the humourlessness of pontificating prelates.

**What is your most treasured possession?**

My garden.

**What would your super power be?**

To be able to run and jump and do cartwheels as I did when young.

**What would be your fancy dress costume of choice?**

A catsuit with whiskers and mask, as in *Cats*. But can I hire the figure, too?

**What is your guiltiest pleasure?**

A deep, eco-unfriendly, hot bath. Preferably with a glass of champagne and someone sitting on the loo seat gossiping.



**What do you owe your parents?**

Thanks for an extraordinarily happy childhood.

**To whom would you most like to say sorry, and why?**

My dad, who died too soon to see me "come good". He suffered at my addiction to boys and horses.

**What or who is the greatest love of your life?**

Rayne Kruger, my husband. Novelist, historian, partner in my business. He never said, "I told you so" when I disregarded his advice and things went wrong.

**What does love feel like?**

It feels the same at 60 or 70 as at 16. Feeling sick, longing for the phone to ring, renewed interest in poetry. All the clichés.

**What was the best kiss of your life?**

Nothing beats that sloppy kiss of a six-month-old grandchild.

**Which living person do you most despise, and why?**

Robert Mugabe: he inherited a premier's dream - and he blew it.

**What is the worst job you've done?**

Clearing out 42 bin bags of putrid kitchen waste from the basement of the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre. I was wearing strappy black sandals and ended up squelching barefoot through the maggots.

**What has been your biggest disappointment?**

Public catering in the parks, where we lost a tonne of money. Now the public will buy excellent simple, fresh food. All they wanted in the 80s were slimy burgers, Mr Whippy and Coke.

**How often do you have sex?**

Not often enough. And what a question to ask an old lady!

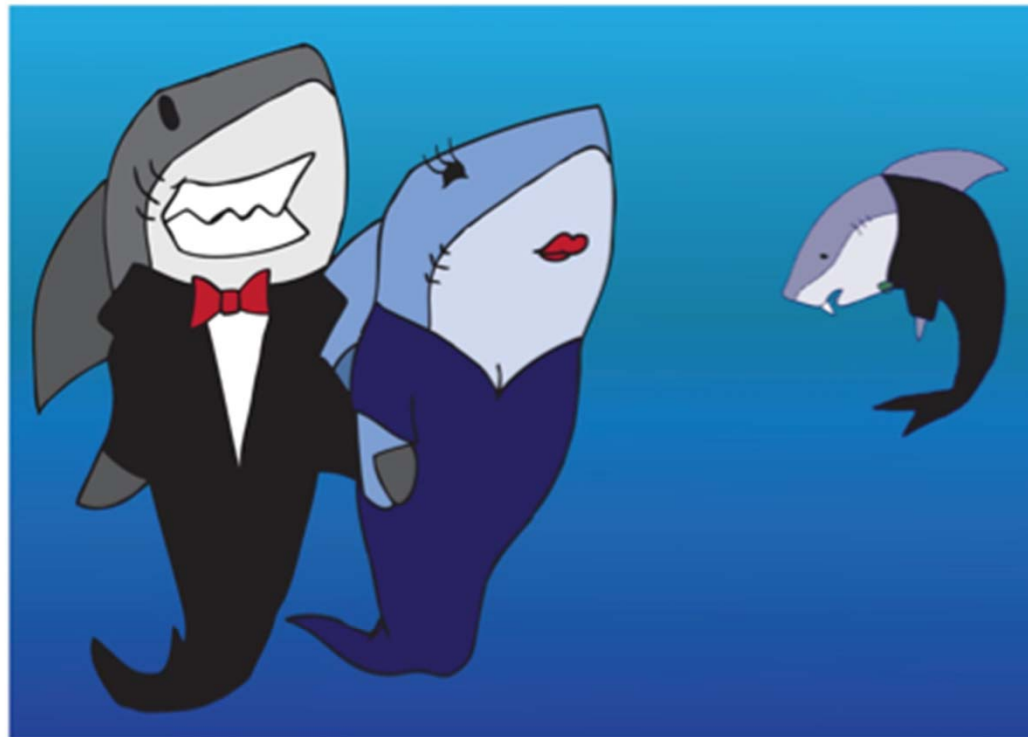
**What single thing would improve the quality of your life?**

New knees.

**Where would you most like to be right now?**

In bed. It's past midnight.

Rosanna Greenstreet



### **Choose me - look what good teeth I have**

IT'S not just humans that subject themselves to the meat market to find a bedfellow. The first ever peek into the elusive mating behaviours of great white sharks has revealed some strange behaviour - one interpretation of which is that males show off side-by-side in front of choosy females in order to secure a mate.

Great whites have never been observed mating. To find out a bit more, Salvador Jorgensen of the Monterey Bay Aquarium in California and colleagues analysed records from 53 electronically tagged great whites in the east Pacific. Their behaviour was tracked in the vicinity of

a suspected mating ground, where they were seen diving down 500 metres from the surface and back again, with males diving much more than females. The diving cannot be hunting behaviour since the area is devoid of prey, so the males could be putting on a show of strength and endurance to entice a mate.

Alternatively, the area could simply be a designated mating zone: so just by going there, females are announcing their willingness to mate. In that case, the diving could be interpreted as the males searching up and down for females. "The fittest males will search the most and have the most success," says Jorgensen.

Either way, the females won't want to hang around for long. The sex is particularly violent: females are often found with bite marks and other injuries.

START

# Privacy versus Facebook

Max Schrems fought to see what the network knew about him – and got 1,200 pages of data in 57 categories



**P**ersonal data is the ‘oil’ Facebook is drilling for,” says Max Schrems, Austrian law student and founder of the advocacy group Europe versus Facebook. “They might not have the best motor to burn it yet, but they know it will be coming.” Schrems, 26, is all too aware of how much data the world’s largest social network stores. In 2010, while researching his thesis, he asked Facebook if it could send him all of the user data the company had relating to his own account. Amazingly, he got a response.

Facebook was, in Schrems’ words, “dumb enough” to send him all his data in a 1,200-page PDF. It showed that Facebook kept records of every person who had ever poked him, all the IP addresses of machines he had used to access the site (as well as which other Facebook users had logged in on that machine), a full history of messages and chats and even his “last location”, which appeared to use a combination of check-ins, data gathered from apps, IP addresses and geo-tagged uploads to work out where he was.

As Schrems went through the document, he found items he thought he had deleted, such as messages, status updates and wall posts. He also found personal information he says he never supplied, including email addresses that had been culled from his friends’ address books. European law is worded vaguely, but says that personal data must be processed “fairly”; people should be given comprehensive information on how it will be used; the data processed should not be “excessive” in relation to the purpose for which it was collected; it should be held securely and deleted when no longer needed. And each person should have the right to access all of their personal data.

ILLUSTRATION: POPPIYWOOD

In 2011, Schrems created Europe versus Facebook, which published the documents Facebook had sent him and flagged up where they didn’t comply with EU law. He got in touch with the Office of the Irish Data Protection Commissioner (IDPC) – Facebook Ireland is the “data controller” for its European users – and sent 22 detailed complaints showing how Facebook wasn’t compliant, five relating to it allegedly not deleting data. He also complained about “shadow profiles”, where Facebook collects contact information relating

## How Facebook tracks your behaviour trail

- 1. Check-ins**  
This lists the exact locations where a user has checked in. It includes author, messages, tagged users, an ID number and a time stamp.
- 2. Last location**  
Shows the last place the site got from you. How is this obtained? Probably from apps, check-ins, geo-tagged photos and the last used IP address.
- 3. Friends**  
A listing of all your friends with their ID number. If you remove a friend he or she will be listed in the section “removed friends”.
- 4. Messages**  
All messages, including chat, you have ever sent or received. They can no longer be deleted and US agencies can access them at will.
- 5. Shares**  
This shows all the links a user posted on a user’s wall. Each has to be deleted from the wall individually. It includes posts that the user has deleted.
- 6. Connections**  
This section lists links to pages that the user “likes”. Highly useful for ad targeting, these often include sensitive information.



body & mind wellbeing



## THIS MONTH WE LOVE...

### ■ THE ROOT CAUSE

Get more beetroot in your diet. This superfood boosts stamina, lowers cholesterol and stabilises blood sugar. The G'NOSH Spicy Beetroot & Mint Dip, £2.49 (ocado.com) contains 73 per cent beetroot and is packed with flavour. It tastes so great, it's hard to believe it's good for you.

### ■ OMEGA ADVANCES

Upgrade from regular fish oil to Cleanmarine Krill Oil capsules £22.99 for 60 (cleanmarinekrilloil.com). From a sustainable source, krill oil provides omega-3 in a more easily absorbable phospholipid form than fish oil, and is known to be more effective in beating PMS symptoms.

### ■ RE-ENERGISE

Avoid feeling rundown this winter with Thalgo L'Océane, £22 for a 20-day supply (thalgo.com). A daily vial of this sea water recharges nutrient-deficient cells re-energising the body from the inside.



What do you think?? I'll wait for some advice pretty please and shall submit tomorrow early morning :-)...thaaaanks.



The image has been let out and had a lil flip around....hmmm which one?

FRIDAY, 23 NOVEMBER 2012

## What do you think?

Think I'm about finished with Harry Hill now, been playing around with colours and borders to make it a bit more Peter Blake-esque... What do you guys think? Feedback would be much appreciated.. => I can't decide which one I like the most..

## Harry Hill My worst job? Junior doctor, Kingston hospital, 1988

Harry Hill, 47, was born in Woking, Surrey. He qualified as a doctor but gave up medicine in 1990 to concentrate on comedy. Two years later he won the Perrier newcomer award at the Edinburgh festival fringe. In 1993, he had his own radio show, Harry Hill's Fruit Corner, and the following year he moved into TV. His current show, TV Burp, has a Saturday prime-time slot on ITV1. His Bumper Book Of Bloopers has just been published. He is married with three daughters and lives in London.

**What is your greatest fear?**

I am concerned I may be going bald.

**What is your earliest memory?**

I went to a friend's party when I was five and his dad got home from work and removed his tin legs.

**Which living person do you most admire?**

The artist Magda Archer [his wife].

**What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?**

Workaholism.

**What is the trait you most deplore in others?**

The can't-do attitude.

**What was your most embarrassing moment?**

I fell into a pie and my trousers fell down at a funeral.

**Aside from a property, what's the most expensive thing you've bought?**

A painting by Sir Peter Blake.

**What is your most treasured possession?**

My Morrissey wig.

**What would your super power be?**

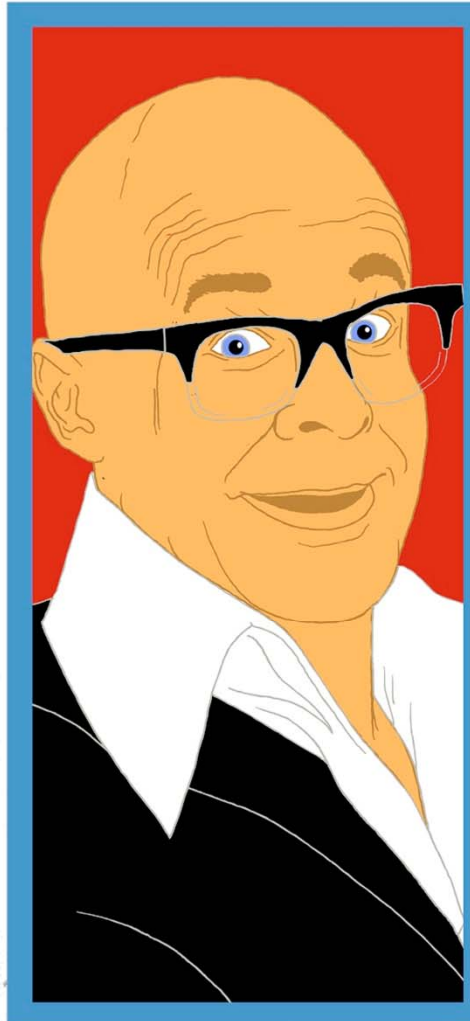
Shortsightedness.

**What makes you unhappy?**

People who forgot that show business is supposed to be fun.

**If you could bring something extinct back to life, what would you choose?**

King Kong.



**What do you most dislike about your appearance?**

I have tiny eyes.

**Who would play you in the film of your life?**

Paul Burrell.

**What is the worst thing anyone's said to you?**

"You are shit, mate."

**What is your guiltiest pleasure?**

Driving an old gas-guzzling Roller.

**What do you owe your parents?**

The ability to tan easy.

**To whom would you most like to say sorry, and why?**

To James: if I'd put the water in his bowl, he might still be alive.

**Who would you invite to your dream dinner party?**

The Beatles.

**Which words or phrases do you most overuse?**

Fight!

**What is the worst job you've done?**

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**If you could go back in time, where would you go?**

Liverpool, the Cavern, early 60s.

**When did you last cry, and why?**

Watching Downton Abbey -

Fellowes is maxing out!

**How do you relax?**

I can't.

**What is the closest you've come to death?**

My friend Matt drove us into a tree.

**What do you consider your greatest achievement?**

Leaving medicine.

**What keeps you awake at night?**

There's a buzzing sound I haven't been able to identify the origin of.

**How would you like to be remembered?**

I really don't mind if you forget me.

**Tell us a secret**

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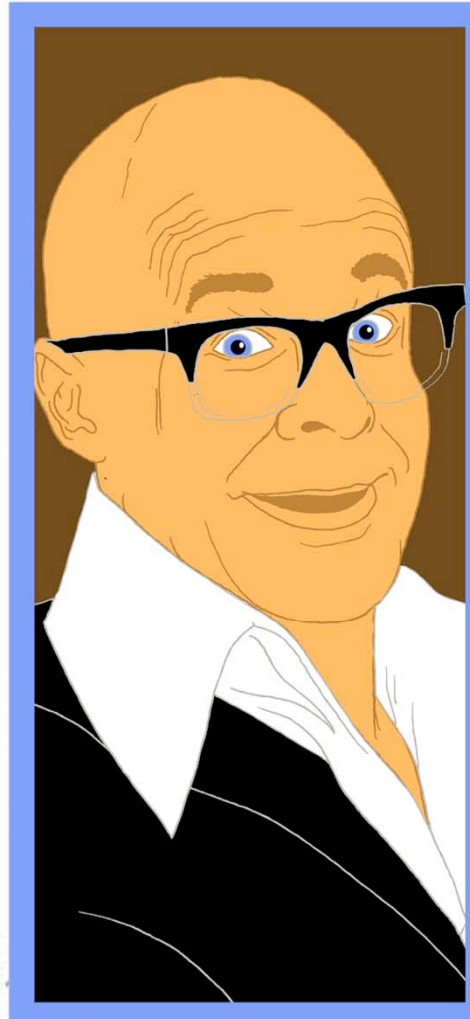
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Friday, 23 November 2012 23:33:00 GMT

first one gets my vote...the background and border are more blake-esque to me....i think these are great and just right for the piece...lighthearted and fun

i'm way behind you guys it seems!

Reply

Saturday, 24 November 2012 22:45:00 GMT

yep I agree the 1st one stands out more although I do like the red! but then I have a thing for red as a colour :)

Reply

Sunday, 25 November 2012 16:44:00 GMT

red as a colour dawny...as opposed to a political stance?! lol

Reply





I went for a repeated image as I felt that would add to the pop art effect and I then experimented with changing the colours but I was still not satisfied with the result as I felt I took away from the shading and detail of the drawing.

Harry Hill Edits



Changed the yellow tone on the first edit, made a second one but I dunno, what you guys think?

STARTERS

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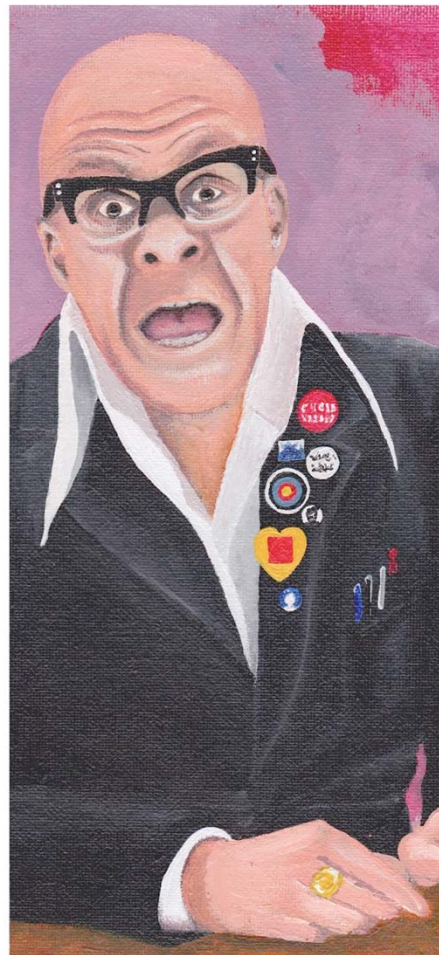
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# **FINDINGS & DISCUSSION**

## **Positive Interdependence**

- Fantasy – The Race was a game
- Role – Required to assign captain, blog admin
- Reward – Prize money
- Identity – Team names, logos, etc

*‘I thought we worked well together. I was lucky to have team mates that took it seriously and used it to its full advantage.’*

- Degree of positive interdependence varied per team

*‘Some people were more up for the group effort than others.’*

## **Individual Accountability**

- Teams and assigned specific roles and aspects

*‘We divided the work up equally, starting with personal preference.’*

- There appear to be differences between members of the same team

*‘..... It was very difficult to get other members’ feedback, only a few people did it quite well.’*

## **Face-to-Face Promotive Activities**

- Varying Degrees as individuals perceived interaction differently.

*‘I was able to get a lot of second/third opinions on my work which I do not normally get, so I think that I was able to refine my work to a high standard.’*

*‘Some members only put their work up once it had been sent off ot after the deadline.’*



## **Online Interpersonal and small group skills**

- Groups worked well together and communicated
- Often Team Captain ensured team came together
- Some teams used Facebook
- Identified lack of participation but did nothing about it

*'I think the team worked really well together and we were all encouraging and supportive of each other work while still giving critical feedback. I feel like most of us improved and got a better understanding of what was wanted from us.'*

*'It was very difficult to get other members' feedback, only a few people did it quite well.'*

## **Group Processing**

- Groups did reflect on their progress
- Groups did make adaptations
- Example = Students chose to use Facebook
- Students used face to face time to reflect also

*'We discussed being more honest with our feedback as we got to know each other's work more.'*

*'Honestly, we just assigned editorials so that they'd all get done.'*

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# **CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

## Conclusions & Recommendations

- Collective Blogs are a useful tool for collaborative learning
- Each aspect of Collaborative Learning can exist
- Mixed Results were seen both between groups and between students within groups
  
- For Staff it is easier to see who has contributed within the group
- Works well for Art and Design students
- Provides a means by which future activities can be structured

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