Making Learning Visible:

Using Video and Wiki Technology to Increase Student Engagement with Learners in Large International Cohorts – Two Case Studies from UK Higher Education.

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Background

- Rapid growth in student numbers on both modules (class sizes of up to 465)
- Low base in terms of technology use in the classroom - funding through JISC for trials and technical support.
- "Students as Agents of Change"
- Both cases conceived as action research projects (Kemmis, 1988)

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Theoretical rationale

- Social constructivism – communication underpinning knowledge construction and higher level learning (Bruner, 1996, Vygotsky, 1978, Wertsch, 1985)
- Encouraging collaborative learning through group work to improve learning outcomes (Johnson et al. 1991)
- Self-regulated learning (Ridley et al. 1992; Zimmerman, 1989) and self-efficacy (Schunk & Pajares, 2002)
- Feedback, Feed forward and peer review (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Rodway-Dyer and Dunne, 2009)

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Research Aims

Video Camcorder

- Review technological, organisational and pedagogic issues in use of Flip camcorders by students
- Whether and in what ways student-led use of camcorders can support learning and skills
- Develop and refine practices incrementally using student feedback
- Develop resources and recommendations for future use of camcorders

Wiki

- Ascertain the extent to which using a wiki can help to monitor student engagement in group work effectively
- Enable decision-making about whether a wiki is able to provide a suitable vehicle for assessment that supports learning and achievement for all students

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Research Design/Methods

Video Camcorder

- Three stage project – covering three cohorts on a 1st year BA Business and Management module – Theory and Practice of Management
- Pilot study in first year (2009). Used student reflective accounts and tutor perceptions to refine phases 2 and 3
- Survey written and administered by Video Champions
- Focus groups
- Post-completion questionnaire

Wiki

- Three stage project – covering three cohorts on an MSc module – Strategy
- Longitudinal study September 2009-July 2012
- Base-line survey
- Analysis of wiki use – quantitative e.g. times and volumes; qualitative e.g. analysis of discourse and some netnographic observation (Kozinets, 1998)
- Reflective statements
- Post-completion questionnaire
- Tutor perceptions

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Findings – Camcorders

- Reflective accounts told rich stories of personal and academic growth
- Survey – 72% thought use of video beneficial (n=161); 57% useful for reviewing group projects; 50% improved presentation skills; 40% helped with understanding by reviewing recordings
- Enabled students to understand how and what they were learning

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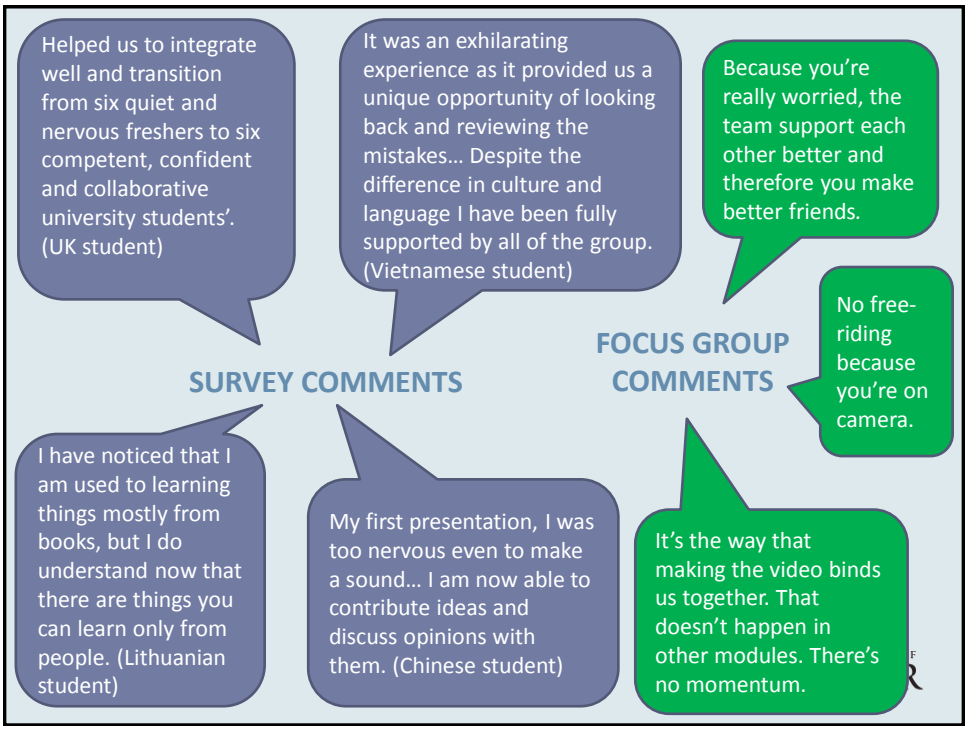

Findings - Wiki

- Between 6% and 10% of students had used wikis previously
- Over 97% of cohort engaged with the wiki in a substantive way each year
- 14% of the cohort in 2010/1 considered it to be the best aspect of the module
- Asynchronous nature of discussions on the wiki enabled less confident students to participate more fully
- Free-riders easily identified and dealt with
- Plagiarism and academic dishonesty virtually absent
- Many of the findings from other case studies using wikis were confirmed in practice in this context: including – including the wiki as part of the summative course assessment leads to better participation (Cole, 2009); priming students leads to earlier engagement (Wheeler et al. 2008).

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Conclusions

- No student could hide away and not contribute without it being noticed
- Group learning dos not rely on a few enthusiasts
- Support can be given early when group working breaks down
- Requires a high level of input from tutors if managed well
- Work submitted on time and to a high standard – students worked beyond the brief
- Student focus on style and standards
- Asynchronous aspect allows students to learn at their own pace
- Re-personalises learning and provides reassurance
- Emphasises the key nature of digital literacy
- Led to increased feedback and self-regulation/self-efficacy

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