16th Durham Blackboard Users Conference 2016 – Learning from Failure

6th, 7th & 8th January – Durham University

PAPER ABSTRACT:

'All eggs in one basket… or just blindfold the chicken?' with relation to tackling first year student engagement with learning technologies and the VLE

This workshop aims to explore the value of the VLE in light of students just using their smartphones to access Blackboard. As we know, many Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) tools and resources used in the VLE simply do not work with smartphones. The workshop will aim to explore if this disparity in user experience stifles creativity and hampers the notion of a 'one stop shop and learning environment', which the VLE has traditionally been. One argument is to employ our energies into channeling TEL purely towards smartphone use, while another is to be more authoritative as an institution and expect users to look beyond their smartphone for a full VLE user experience as recommended in Jisc's Mobile Learning - A practical guide for educational organisations planning to implement a mobile learning initiative.

Breaking into groups, each will discuss the implications and merits of the user experience between smartphone users and lap/desk-top users and what stance institutions should take with this challenge.

The context to this workshop stems from UCA's TEL philosophy, which has always been to embrace new and existing technologies and make them work with the university's technical infrastructure and academic processes. Therefore, the use of third party tools such as Turnitin, Campus Pack, Library Search, WordPress, Twitter, Google Apps and a bunch of other web services have always been embraced and embedded in some shape or form into Blackboard - and things have always gone quite smoothly - or so we thought. But recent student feedback reveals some students only view the VLE through their phone and therefore find little to hold their interest as much of the rich embedded functionality simply does not work. UCA now has to reconsider it's VLE 'melting pot' and the gritty implications (and sacrifices) should we offer all students the same user experience.

The workshop is an opportunity to:
a) discover what stance other institutions are taking and
b) tackle the problem head on with a set of hard hitting questions each group will consider, debate and disseminate

Timings
10 mins - Workshop Introduction and Context
20 mins - Breakout groups with set tasks to discuss and decide
20 mins - Each group to disseminate their findings
5 mins - Roundup and close session

The workshop findings will be written up and made available to the Blackboard community and will contribute to a body of research I am undertaring around VLE vs the Smartphone in TEL

References

Mobile learning - A practical guide for educational organisations planning to implement a mobile learning initiative.
Available at: https://jisc.ac.uk/guides/mobile-learning

Kadle, A. (2009) Five Myths of Mobile Learning. Upside Learning.
Available at: http://www.upsidelearning.com/blog/index.php/2009/08/24/five-myths-of-mobile-learning/