

THETA

The Higher Education Technology Agenda

Social media as a learning community: the good the bad and the ugly

Information and computing technologies are now ubiquitous in higher education. Higher education is becoming increasingly available for students as the online environment enables access to teaching materials anywhere at any time. Because of ubiquitous computing in higher education, academics are using Web 2.0 platforms such as wikis, blogs and social networking sites for teaching and learning with varying degrees of success (Cole, 2009; Churchill, 2009; Trevathan & Myers; 2013).

Within this environment, tertiary institutions are being pushed to offer online courses in order to survive in the 21st century market (Earnest and Young, 2012). This is being pushed with little guidance as to what an online course should “look like” and how to ensure deep learning outcomes that challenge students at an extended abstract level of thinking. Nevertheless, the reality of transitioning from the traditional education model to an online environment, whilst ensuring the same quality student learning outcomes, is not so straightforward. Although there are institution discussion fora available, many students are now turning to social networking sites (see Gray, 2013; Trevathan & Myers, 2013). Rather than prescribing technologies for learning to students, a more proactive approach is to listen to what students want to use, adapting to their changing needs.

Ring (2012) found “from all the social media tools that are currently available, it is very plausible for Facebook (FB) to be adopted by higher education” (p. 3). In particular, Facebook (FB) Groups are emerging as one of the most popular choices as discussion fora as students are already familiar with it and use it daily (Ring, 2012). While there have been papers supporting the use of social media and others highlighting some of the challenges that are confronted by both students and academic, this paper provides a lived experience of the challenges of being confronted by student engagement and the opportunities that engaging with students through social media offer those academics prepared to take up the challenge. This paper investigates the impact on the development of an online course using student engagement in a social networking learning community. The results enabled the development of an online environment that engaged students socially, which provided

constant feedback to the students that could be measured by site changes and developments. By being flexible and 'available' students found that the changes enabled them to achieve greater success, while staff were rewarded with improved student experience with the course (SEC) evaluations. This paper provides learning and teaching reflections that can guide those who have tried using social media with or without success, as well as those yet to explore this burgeoning facet of educational engagement. These approaches, including support tools used are offered to share the successes and failures to benefit both academics and future students.

Heather Gray, Jarrod Trevathan and Kiran Madisa
Griffith University

■ [Full paper](#)

SHARE THIS:

[Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [LinkedIn](#) [Email](#) [Print](#) [More](#)

Loading...

2 THOUGHTS ON "SOCIAL MEDIA AS A LEARNING COMMUNITY: THE GOOD THE BAD AND THE UGLY"

Pingback: [Live Streaming of THETA 2015 | INSider](#)

Pingback: [Live Streaming of THETA 2015 | INSight](#)

[+ Follow](#)