

# Opps for Apps Symposium

## Introduction

### Group Biography for School of Education Apps for Innovation project

The group comprises the Deputy Dean for Student Experience, senior lecturers from all four Subject Areas within the School, the School's Learning Technologist and a research assistant. All academic colleagues have backgrounds as practitioners in different phases and specialist areas of education, prior to working in higher education and some are very new to working at the University. What the group shares is a commitment to developing their skills, experience and knowledge in using technology enhanced learning, with a critical lens, learning from each other and drawing on relevant research. Some colleagues are already seasoned users and makers of digital tools and resources; others are less experienced, but keen to learn more, and to enhance our students' experiences of learning in higher education, especially as many of them will become educators themselves.

## Abstract

The group will demonstrate and explain how their use of apps with iPads in their teaching has enhanced the students' learning experience and enabled academics to extend their teaching "repertoire". The group will also discuss and question the use of technology-enhanced learning, based on their own experiences and taking account of relevant theoretical perspectives and current research. Students' views will also be considered. An important element of the Apps for Innovation project is that it will inform future staff development within the School and across the University; lessons learned and implications for next steps will also be proposed.

## iPads in HE

G+ community: an immediate and responsive environment for exchanging ideas.

A core set of open-ended content-creation apps emerged as users trialled them for different purposes and recorded successes as mini case studies on the blog.

Blog + G+ community: collective knowledge-building around a common purpose

Documents the evolution of participants' use of a core set of apps for content creation over the course of a year with tools such as Thinglink, Skitch, Padlet, Rollworld, Explain Everything and Visual Poet being reused to meet a range of learning objectives across different subject areas within the group. A shared consensus has emerged that apps such as these can help make students' learning more visible.

As the group solved problems together, sought help from each other, reused solutions and evaluated new apps, they developed a 'collective competence' and a shared repertoire of resources and strategies.

Knowledge continued to be transferred between novices and experts within the group outside of face-to-face meetings via the G+ community discussions

Cross-pollination of ideas: apps for art activities bringing together the 'app smashing' combination of Rollworld, Fragment and BeFunky, which has been independently explored by three academics and has resulted in several related posts and a series of comments on the blog and community.

## A learning extension: combining blogs with communities

Through our first three cases we have shown that technology can facilitate situated learning by providing an environment in which learners can interact and share ideas using collaborative

technologies. In case 3 we have shown how a G+ community can enhance the use of blogs by providing a more immediate and responsive environment for exchanging ideas. Our online spaces can be seen as an example of situated learning taking place within a virtual community of practice or OCoP (Oliver and Herrington, 2000; Coppola, 1999), allowing for both synchronous and asynchronous communication. This gives learners control over the pace and place of their learning and engagement (Wenger et al. 2002; Gannon-Leary and Fonainha, 2007). In the next two cases we demonstrate the application of these ideas to a higher education context.

#### **The ipad project- A blog and community to enhance research and CPD in Higher Education**

In case 4 below, you can see that our growing community of practice involving academic and support staff across our university division has developed shared metacognition as outlined by Gunwardena (Gunwardena et al., 2009) around the use of apps for learning in a Higher Education context. Their metacognitive learning has been documented via a G+ community allowing them to quickly exchange ideas as well as a blog to archive their applications to practice as mini case studies. Mason and Rennie describe this type of learning shift as 'group mediated cognition' in which 'knowledge is created, shared, remixed, repurposed, and passed along.' (2008, p.10). Our community demonstrates this as it documents the evolution of participants' use of a core set of apps for content creation over the course of a year with tools such as Thinglink, Skitch, Padlet, Rollworld, Explain Everything and Visual Poet being reused to meet a range of learning objectives across different subject areas within the group. A shared consensus has emerged that apps such as these can help make students' learning more visible. As the group solved problems together, sought help from each other, reused solutions and evaluated new apps, they developed a 'collective competence' and a shared repertoire of resources and strategies (Wenger, 2011, pp1-6).

#### **Case 4: The ipad project- A Higher Education (HE) blog and G+ community to enhance research and CPD in Higher Education**

##### **Learning intentions:**

- To document and support the use of iPads by academic staff within the School of Education over the course of an academic year and provide a platform for sharing expertise more widely.
- To provide a Google+ (G+) space for academic staff to ask questions, share resources and ideas, and reflect on their practice during the implementation of the iPads project.

**Case Overview:** The G+ community and blog aimed to document the rollout of the use of iPads by academic staff in their teaching and learning. The project provided support for novice users who were able to seek advice from their peers, who shared what worked for them, until they gained sufficient confidence to experiment for themselves. New skills developed, supported by a collaborative team with a common purpose that tested and shared strategies and resources.

**Fig 4: A sample of a Google+ page for the iPad case study**

The screenshot shows a Google+ community page for 'Apps for Innovation'. The page layout includes a header with the community name and a description: 'Exploring apps for teaching and learning at the University of Northampton'. Below the header is a navigation bar with 'Notifications on' and a search bar. The main content area features several posts:

- A post by Helen Caldwell (OWNER) titled 'Teaching with iPads' from April 30, 2015. The post includes a photo of a teacher in a classroom and text describing a Flipboard on 'Early Years international education'.
- A post by Anna Cox from April 30, 2015, with text: 'It has been good to discuss this with a colleague before posting. I am aware it is a work in progress but seems worth sharing.'
- A post by Jean Edwards from April 26, 2015, titled 'Kings and Queens of England', featuring a grid of historical figures.

On the right side, there is an 'About this community' section with 'Invite people' and 'Share this community' buttons, and a 'Pinned by moderator' section with a welcome message from Helen Caldwell.

**Community URL:** <https://plus.google.com/u/0/communities/110218249780833007111>

**Blog URL:** <http://mypad.northampton.ac.uk/appsforinnovation/>

**Learning Outcomes:**

- Knowledge continued to be transferred between novices and experts within the group outside of face-to-face meetings via the G+ community discussions.
- Over time, a core set of open-ended content-creation apps emerged as users trialed them for different purposes and recorded successes as mini case studies on the blog.
- Close links were made with other communities using social network tools, and between research and practice as people shared ideas from different perspectives and discovered common ground.

As in case 3, we have combined remote and physical collaboration by mixing occasional face-to-face contact with connected conversations through social media. The blog and online community together provided a structured framework in which social learning could take place (Wenger, 2011). Our cases can thus be seen as connectivist learning environments in which

participants make connections with people and resources, co-create ideas and make choices within an environment mediated by technology (Saadatmand and Kumpulainen, 2014; Downes, 2010; Siemens, 2005); "Connectivist models explicitly rely on the ubiquity of networked connections between people, digital artefacts, and content" (Anderson and Dron, 2011, p. 87).

Unlike face-to-face learning events where a cohort learns the same content at the same pace, an online community may have different types of participation and differing degrees of expertise. Knowledge transfer can occur at any time between experts and novices or from peer to peer (Bielaczyc and Collins, 1999) as the community generates 'a common history' and its own 'artefacts' (Lave and Wenger, 1998). And, as Johnson (2001) points out, individuals may move from the edges of the community to the centre as their expertise increases. Indeed, individuals may belong to a network of communities at any one time (Ozturk and Ozcinar, 2013) bringing 'a new fluidity' to learning. Wick (2000) notes that collaborative teams might form and dissolve resulting in cross-pollination of ideas. In the community of Case 4, this can be seen around the apps for art activities bringing together the 'app smashing' combination of Rollworld, Fragment and BeFunky, which has been independently explored by three academics and has resulted in several related posts and a series of comments on the blog and community.

A benefit of online learning is identified here; learning opportunities are multiplied as the collective learning potential of the group exceeds that of the individual working on their own and can thus lead to accelerated learning (Richardson, 2010; Hung, 2002). Johnson highlights this as a key idea when saying, "The learning that evolved from these communities is collaborative, in which the collaborative knowledge of the community is greater than any individual knowledge" (Johnson, 2001, p34). We would echo that this has been the major learning potential of the use of blogs and communities in our higher education courses.

- Online spaces creating a hub for the **community of practice** external to the institution
- **Peer to peer learning** across phase boundaries of schools and university and between students, academics and teachers
- Contributions from students sit side by side with posts and comments by academics, cutting across formal structures and forging new understandings **across educational sectors** of the ways in which technologies can transform learning
- Learning opportunities are amplified as the **collective learning potential** of the group exceeds that of the individual working on their own. Document
- **fluid learning journeys** across a combination of locations, times, technologies and social settings in higher education.

The Slides

(see Carmel's presentation)

#### **Influences:**

Deng, L., and Yuen, A. H. (2011). Towards a framework for educational affordances of blogs. *Computers and Education*, 56(2), 441-451.

Farmer, B., Yue, A., and Brooks, C. (2008). Using blogging for higher order learning in large cohort university teaching: A case study. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 24(2), 123-136.

- Gannon-Leary, P. & Fontainha, E. (2007). Communities of Practice and virtual learning communities: benefits, barriers and success factors. *Barriers and Success Factors. eLearning Papers*, 5.
- Gunawardena, C. Hermans, M. Sanchez, D. Richmond, C. Bohley, M. & Tuttle, R. (2009). A theoretical framework for building online communities of practice with social networking tools. *Educational Media International*, 46.1, 3-16.
- Heaton, R. (2014). Moving mindsets: Re-conceptualising the place of visual culture as multi-sensory culture in primary art education. *Canadian Review of Art Education*, 41.1, 77-96.
- Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press.
- Mason, R. & Rennie, F. (2008). Social networking as an educational tool. *E-learning and social networking handbook: Resources for higher education*, 1-24.
- Wenger, E. White, N. & Smith, J. D. (2009). *Digital habitats: Stewarding technology for communities*. Portland: CPsquare.
- Yang, S. H. (2009). Using blogs to enhance critical reflection and community of practice. *Educational Technology and Society*, 12.2, 11-21

**Helen: Intro (Carmel's slide)**

**Belinda: Thinglink + logistics**

<http://tinyurl.com/appsforinnovation>

<https://www.thinglink.com/scene/655712508119613441>

**Wendy: Blog**

<http://mypad.northampton.ac.uk/appsforinnovation/>

**Anna: Community**

<https://plus.google.com/u/0/communities/110218249780833007111>

slides/ summary Helen upload as google doc