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Scaffolding and supporting virtual communities

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Scaffolding and Supporting Students

Find us on Facebook

Vicki Fisher, Camilla Goodman, Jean Hatton, Lehan Medlock, Jane Mullen and Kirsty Rowan
Starting Point

‘Young People have a strong impetus to connect and socialise with their peers online’ (Thomas, 2011:10)

- Promote autonomy and collaboration
- Privacy settings and challenges.
- Using social networking sites professionally.
- Isolated on placement: mentoring support.
- Building virtual communities.
Methodology

- Setting up of Facebook pages 2 professionally endorsed undergraduate courses
- Professional use and safeguarding
- Childhood Studies student led Facebook page
- Questionnaires and evaluation
- Listening to students’ voices
Questioning Community

‘You don’t build a community by building one’ Valerie Hey (SRHE, Feb 2012)

• Are these 3 Facebook (FB) pages real communities?
• Who should build a FB community?
• Whose needs are these pages satisfying?
• What size is an effective FB community?
• Are we enforcing sociability spaces on students?
• Lave and Wenger (1991:94) questioned the control of the learning community and ‘legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice’. Is using Facebook inclusive? What about the ‘lurkers’ and the non users?
7.5% Think it helps to get to know people/develop community.

33% Think it would be a good idea to keep this page after the first year.

93% Think it helps to get to know people/develop community.

2% Still don't use Facebook

72% think the Youth & Community shared page is a good idea!

48% use it only when receive a notification

40% Have posted something on the page and 48% read what others have put.
Broke the ice first day of Uni 30+ students met outside to go to first class.

Group support out of hours

75 members for our year’s page

95% of people who took part in our survey would like Facebook to continue

Childhood Studies Year One
Early Primary

Student feedback

- 47% of 1st years posted on the site but most of the remaining 53% gained help from reading other posts.
- 100% comments very positive about staff presence on site.
- 100% want SOS to continue and still have mentors from 3rd years

3rd years still need help too!

'We must stay in touch when we are at placement - it can be so lonely!!'

Inspiring tomorrow’s professionals
Reflections:
‘You don’t build a community by building one’

- Are these FB pages real communities?
- Who should build a FB community?
- Whose needs are these pages satisfying?
- What size is an effective FB community of practice?
- Are we enforcing sociability spaces on students?
- Lave and Wenger (1991:94) questioned the control of the learning community and ‘legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice’. Is Facebook inclusive? What about the ‘lurkers’ and the non users?
Our thoughts and questions

- Only 2% of *youth work* students said that they would use the FB page cf 85% said that they would use face to face contact to discuss an issue with peers.
- Should virtual mentoring for placement students be further developed?
- Does virtual mentoring need tutor presence?
- If no tutor presence on FB page does this become ‘*the blind leading the blind*’?
- Student only page and professionalism?
- Ecclestone & Hayes (2009) critique of the ‘cotton wool approach’ - therapeutic education that is not needed and doesn’t benefit students in the long run
Reference list

- Gosden (2007) ‘Students’ trial by Facebook’ *The Guardian*