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Designs on E-Learning International Conference 2012

Cloud and Crowd: Towards a collaborative future

5 – 7 September 2012. University of the Arts, London

Innovating the collaborative future of global fashion business

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Abstract:

With the increasingly ubiquitous nature of social networks and cloud computing, users are starting to explore new ways to interact with, and exploit these developing paradigms. Social networks are used to reflect real world relationships that allow users to share information and form connections between one another, essentially creating dynamic virtual organizations. (Chard et al, 2010) The reality within the fashion industry is that business practices are evolving at an unprecedented rate in accordance to Generation Y's dedicated and intuitive use of web 2.0 technologies and social networks that now demands of fashion education a re-thinking of the relationship between technology and learning.

The future employment of graduates, calls for new innovative thinking from skilled and digitally aware learners who have the capacity to participate in learning throughout their life by using technologies of their own choosing (JISC, 2009). The challenge for educational practitioners is to embrace digital technologies to harness the collective skills, knowledge and effort of all those involved in our learning communities and to transform practice to more accurately reflect the way we live and work (JISC, 2011).

This research outlines our vision of, and experiences with, creating a digital social community of design business learners, looking specifically at possible digital mechanisms that could be used to create a dynamic cloud infrastructure in a social network environment (see fig 2). The poster presents an exploratory case study (Yin, 2002) undertaken as part of postgraduate research. It documents the phases of the first two years of the intervention within the intermediate level module Global Fashion and Textile Sourcing. A transformational strategy was adopted to create a collaborative community of learning. This is based on a conceptual Product Lifecycle Management system (see fig 1) as a framework to test and support theory and practice in the fashion and textile industry.

The project aims are:

- To establish multi-disciplinary, collaborative learning spaces that mimic professional practice and demonstrates the interconnectivity within global sourcing networks thereby providing an immersive, learning experience to challenge students to acquire knowledge and skills and use digital technologies appropriately.
- To stimulate a dynamic connection with the global industry and its resources at the macro level through active participation in the creation and sharing of knowledge within a ‘global sourcing’ community at a micro level
- To embed an understanding of the diversity of graduate employment opportunities that enables students to shape their own ‘graduate identity’ (Holmes, 2001) and lay claim to it through reflection and articulation of their skills with examples from business practice.

In the pilot, learners were randomised in interdisciplinary product development teams with a brief to connect design, finance, buying, retail, and management concepts and experiences within a digitally-connected learning community. Each learning team used personal mobiles with online social networking spaces/ e-learning tools: Blogs, Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, Wiki, Prezi, SkyDrive, Wix.com and other free open source tools to record, edit, share, construct and present ideas around the communication of product development data.

It is envisioned that the future direction for the project will reach out into business communities and provide conduits to SME (small and medium enterprises) to create a community of learners, educators and industry communicating, learning and working together through open and flexible use of digital technologies and e-learning technologies.



Figure 1. CONCEPTUAL PLM SYSTEM

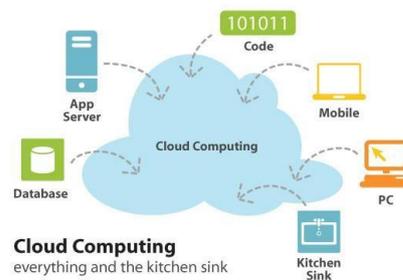


Figure 2. CLOUD COMPUTING...

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Yin, R.K., (2002) Case Study Research: Design and Methods (3rd ed) Sage Publications

Figures:

Figure 1. <http://www.txtgroup.com/scm/uk/txtperform/plm.shtml>

Figure 2. http://www.cloudict.com/1/Cloud_Computing.html