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Do we use the VLE effectively to innovate/transform learning in creative arts?

Dr Jess Power, Vidya Kannara and Jonathan Marsh

Literature

- E-learning enhances learning (Sharpe, 2010; Wilkinson, 2011)
- Roles of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) and Virtual Learning Environments (VLE)
- Shift from emerging technology to emerging practices (JISC, 2011)

Highlights

- Importance of VLE in ubiquitous learning
- Latest challenge is to explore suitable strategies to embed available technological innovations

Aim

- Investigate the use of the VLE in creative arts and humanities as a tool for learning.

Methodology

Three phase approach across two schools:

- VLE content analysis – examined 704 VLE course module areas
- Staff questionnaire – explore current and predicted use of VLE and other e-learning technologies
- Focus Groups – explore good practice, identify knowledge gaps and support mechanisms

Issues

- Ease-of-use and navigation: easier interfaces on the web
- The VLE is perceived as extra work by studio staff
- Seeking solutions outside the VLE
- Lack of appreciation to TEL and blended learning
- VLE not considered during module design
- VLE is seen as a technical solution rather than pedagogical innovation (Salmon, 2005)
- Staff keep up to date via word of mouth, not through training
- Best practices not known

Research Phases

Phase 1 - Analysis & evaluation of the VLE in creative arts & humanities

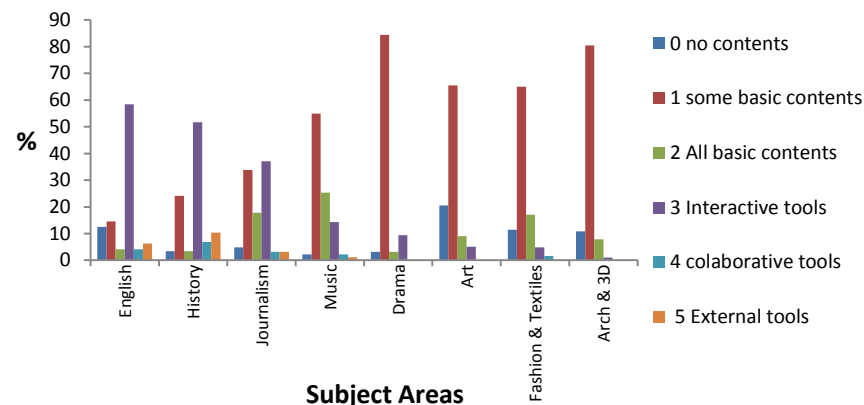


Phase 2 - Exploration of current and predicted use of the VLE and other e-learning technologies



Phase 3 - Identification of good practice, knowledge gaps and mechanisms to support the use of the VLE

VLE Content Analysis



Results

- Creative arts subject areas (music, drama, art, fashion and architecture) had significantly lower use of VLE functions than humanities (English, history, and journalism).
- Staff utilised basic VLE functions
- Lack of user-friendliness identified as a barrier to embedding
- Within creative arts, TEL goes far beyond the boundaries of the VLE

Recommendations

- A culture change and different approaches to TEL is required to transform VLE use and innovate learning in creative arts
- Address the false barriers of interface and user-friendliness through development and training
- Further work and support needs to make the VLEs look more visually appealing

Reference List

- JISC (2011) *Emerging Practice in a Digital Age: A guide to technology-enhanced institutional innovation*, HEFCE, UK.
- Salmon, G. (2005) 'Flying not flapping: a strategic framework for e-learning and pedagogical innovation in higher education institutions', *Research in Learning Technology*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 201 - 218.
- Sharpe, R. (2010) *Conceptualizing differences in learners' experiences of e-learning: a review of contextual models*, [Report] Higher Education Academy Learner Difference (HEALD) synthesis project.
- Wilkinson, S. C. (2011) 'Using socially constructed technology to enhance learning in higher education', *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education*, vol. 3, March.