

SOCIAL MEDIA IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Case Studies, Reflections and
Analysis

EDITED BY CHRIS ROWELL

SOCIAL MEDIA
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Social Media in Higher Education

Case Studies, Reflections and Analysis

Edited by Chris Rowell



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4. Re-Engineered Continuing Professional Development and Modelled Use of Cloud Tools and Social Media by Academic Developers

#Intermediate #Twitter #CPD

Martin Compton and Timos Almpanis

Transforming Lecturer Practice and Mindset

Academic Developers (a.k.a. Lecturers in Education, Teaching Fellows or Educational, Faculty or Staff Developers) may work in discrete units, within faculties, from within a broader education faculty or closely aligned to Human Resources or Quality departments. Their own values and the organisational structures and culture they work within will likely lead them to exhibit a particular 'orientation' such as 'internal consultant', 'modeller-broker' or 'managerial' (Land, 2001). Despite the growth of the role during the 1990s from a position of obscurity to the norm in most institutions today, the varying orientations and frequent restructuring in many higher education institutions can stifle the role of the Academic Developers and lead to a focus on teams rather than individuals and is rooted in scholarship rather than perceived deficits (Gibbs, 2013). As a new 'tribe' in academia (Bath and Smith, 2004) Academic Developers often work in a delicate environment, balancing the competing demands of senior managers against their own values

and negotiating the inevitable tensions that exist when working with busy academics (Brew, 2011), especially those that do not see teaching as their first priority. In a complex and varied world there is one thing that unites Academic Developers and that is a commitment to notions of change. One such change is the (often vague) notion that teaching academics should be doing more with technology.

This vagueness is part of the problem, what exactly should lecturers be doing with technology in their teaching? Bayne (2015) argues that the complex interrelationships between technology, society and education are not clearly understood or articulated. It is difficult to simplify what Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) means and should seek to achieve:

...technology in TEL tends to be black-boxed, under-defined and generally described in instrumental or essentialist terms which either subordinate social practice to technology, or subordinate technology to social practice. (Bayne, 2015)

We are often told that we are or should be in a 'post-digital' age but some higher education providers are still battling with limited Wi-Fi and insufficient computer access (Newman and Beetham, 2017). Likewise, conferences and publications dazzle us with innovative practices that mask the mass of laggards or, at best, late-adopters that perfectly illustrate Rogers' (2003) famous diffusion of innovations model.

We have previously argued (Compton and Almpanis, 2018) that this mixed impression is exacerbated by common models of continuing professional development (CPD) in relation to the use of technology in HE. The CPD is too often standardised and follows a one-size-fits-all model that exhibits the inadequacies of 'transmissive' training rather than the desired 'transformative' development opportunity (Kennedy, 2011).

We nevertheless accept that there is a need to continue to educate academics who teach and those with student-facing roles about the digital capabilities for teaching, learning and assessment, as well as the impact such capabilities could have on their wider professional roles. We argue, though, that many traditional approaches to hastening the pace of change are flawed. Institutional systems (e.g. Virtual Learning Environment, lecture capture) are often conflated in the minds of teachers with all teaching and learning technology. However, we distinguish these from social, collaborative downloadable apps and cloud-based educational and productivity tools designed for education

or productivity purposes. It is those that we use to enhance our own programmes and use as vehicles to support pedagogy-focussed CPD.

We believe tools that enable collaboration, interaction and enhancement are the perfect vehicle to illuminate the practical potential of better student engagement. In many ways, the general productivity tools serve our goals best. They are designed not with teachers and lecturers in mind, but professionals, or anyone else who wants to interact online. A secondary impact of training people in the use of these tools is that it embeds digital skills into their practice and enhances their employability. When these tools are used alongside social/collaborative tools, they provide lecturers with an opportunity to focus on concepts such as digital professionalism, data protection, and e-safety. Academic developers often have a uniquely pan-institutional vista that affords them the opportunity to witness, harness and disseminate actual applied practices (in contrast to the technical or theoretical) which then, in turn, feed into the practice of others. The following two case studies illustrate how we, as academic developers, use these tools and how we interpret the 'social' in social media through re-engineered CPD and modelled use on the PGCert HE programme.

Case Study 1: Re-engineered CPD

A common issue is that much institution-wide CPD (from one-off sessions to pan-institutional teaching and learning conferences) is voluntary. In the case of TEL-based CPD, it is the early adopters and not the *hard-to-reach* that participate. To address these issues we continue to offer a menu of one-off sessions and promote our conferences; but we are also working with key faculty members to engage the harder to reach. For example, we support 'lunch and learn' initiatives, seek invites to whole department or faculty meetings and ensure we are available for faculty-level conferences. Undoubtedly, this is aided and driven by senior management and the culture within which we work, but it can also happen from the bottom up if enthusiastic individuals invite us to such events.

More importantly, we argue that one-size-fits-all, training style CPD sessions are often flawed because they focus on the tool rather than pedagogy and follow a training rather than a discovery format

(Compton and Almpanis, 2017). Thus, the sessions we offer draw on some core principles:

1. We are explicit about the distinction we make between the institutional systems and CPD on offer. We show value in these systems and make clear the centrality of their role whilst allowing space and acceptance for the frequent gripes about the VLE (navigation, clunkiness, un-intuitiveness) or, for example, lecture capture software (challenge to autonomy, implications for practice).
2. We seek to distinguish our sessions from the common experience of the 'follow the trainer' model and aid participants in embracing the idea that they are not in a step-by-step or 'how to' session.
3. Challenging expectation and mindset is partially achieved by the use of 'quick win' openers that illustrate the philosophy of 'easy, free and fit for purpose' as outlined below. For example a Tweet Wall or 'backchannel' is displayed for in-session interaction and after asking participants to contribute, say, their expectations, they are then challenged to set up their own backchannel for their own teaching (done collaboratively where needed, but usually independently). The opportunities and challenges of using such social interaction methods in their own teaching contexts are then naturally discussed.

Pedagogical needs or the nature of the lecturer-student interaction frames the CPD event, rather than the capabilities of the tools themselves. Thus, in the training session we look at co-creating presentations, focussing on cloud-based presentation tools that have collaborative and social functionality, e.g. Haiku Deck and Prezi and how to organise questions in lectures. A large part of the training session models the use of three or four student response systems and finishes with participants choosing one and creating a resource. We have also designed sessions around the long-established concept of the 'advance organizer' (Ausubel, 1978) to illustrate ways in which relatively simple technologies can be used to ask questions in the classroom and draw students into core concepts through reflection or discussion.

Attendees asked 35 questions
with a total number of 33 likes

91% of questions were asked anonymously



What were
the most popular questions?

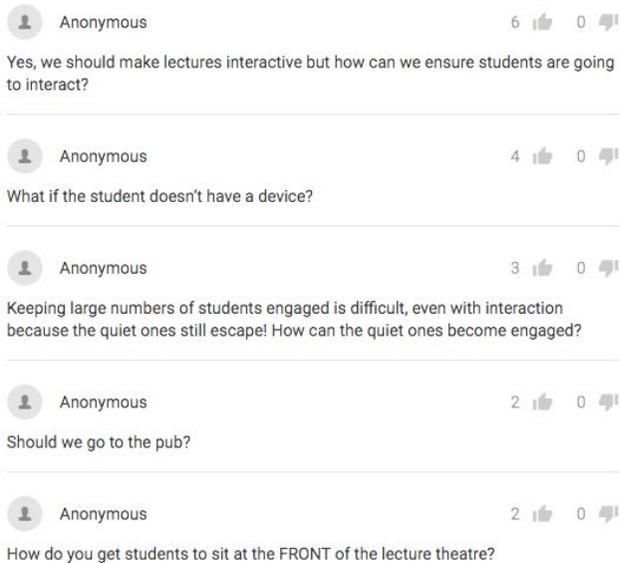


Fig. 4.1 Martin Compton, Backchannel¹ screenshot (2018), CC BY 4.0

¹ Backchannel Chat is an app designed to enable teachers to facilitate online discussions about their subject.

4. As stated above, we are acutely aware of the difficulties many of those in teaching-facing roles have with core technology. Part of the rationale for our approach is to show that there are more accessible entry points and that by using apps and cloud tools as alternatives to built-in VLE functions, for example, the VLE itself can be enhanced. Of course, ease of use is relative so we ensure that there are a range of entry points and that at least one of the ways the pedagogic concept can be addressed with an app or cloud-based tool is very simple. We often highlight the notion that the two core technical skills are 'typing stuff in boxes' and 'copying and pasting web links'.
5. The notion of 'free' is complicated by so-called freemium software or by the implications of an advertising model with adverts appearing alongside resources used. The latter point seems largely immaterial with regard to the ubiquitous YouTube which has normalised this type of advertising, so we simply ensure that participants are alert to limits on freemium tools and the implications of the advertising model.
6. The most important aspect is utility, or a tool's 'fitness for purpose'. To emphasise this point, we refer back to the underpinning pedagogy and encourage participants to recognise their own expertise and contextual pedagogic knowledge. One of the biggest criticisms we have encountered in the past is that academics are unable to connect tools and approaches to their own practice. We pre-empt this challenge by acknowledging it up front, challenging them to find a way to utilise a tool and to share back, at a later date, their experience so that their successes, or even 'magnificent failures', might aid colleagues in or beyond their faculties.

By extending the offer of CPD and by following the principles above, we are seeing a quickening in adoption of social, collaborative and interactive technologies by lecturers and others with teaching responsibilities in the university. In these sessions, we model their use

by embedding them within the sessions themselves wherever possible, thus providing the opportunity to witness our claims of ease of use. We argue that the best way to challenge cynicism, reluctance or outright fear is to respect the existence of these fears and to host CPD events that are open to them whilst simultaneously challenging them in design and delivery. Our goal is to generate momentum and enthusiasm by addressing head-on some of the obstacles to change that apply not only to use of social media but to all aspects of development in pedagogic practices in our institution.

Case Study 2: PGCert in Higher Education (HE)

The PGCert in HE is delivered in a blended mode with some face-to-face contact and substantial online elements, both synchronous and asynchronous. UK-based participants spend four study days on campus, spread over the duration of the year, whereas international participants are visited by the lecturers twice a year. The rest of the programme takes place online, using a combination of institutionally-supported platforms and cloud-based tools.

Moodle is the backbone of the online component of the course, as all core materials are uploaded and/or linked from it; furthermore, the Moodle discussion forums are used extensively by participants and the course team to discuss weekly topics and peer-review each other's group work in a safe environment. Beyond the walled gardens of the VLE, however, a range of other communication and collaboration tools is used in order to utilise the best tool for each task. This also enables us to demonstrate and model the pedagogically effective use of a range of cloud-based tools and enhance participants' digital capabilities.

This approach begins early in the programme. As part of the induction, participants are encouraged to post a short description about themselves and mention the reasons why they are doing the programme in a Moodle forum, titled 'about me'. They are also encouraged to reply on other participants' posts and comment on common interests. A cloud-based wall is used to collate participants' responses on their initial feelings and experiences of what it is to be a student again.

Additionally, free cloud-based presentation software is used for an ice-breaker activity where participants are asked to create one slide

each saying something about themselves and asking a question or using their own ice-breaker activity. This way we offer an alternative way of interacting with others on the programme and help to build a community of learners, but also to model some of the ways participants can help their own new students to settle in and build relationships with each other. A screenshot of a slide from this activity is shown in Figure 4.2 below.

Describe yourself as a horse...

...might be an icebreaker I would do with my equine students...are you a fine, fiery Thoroughbred? Do you work steadily like an Irish cob, or perhaps you're more like a German warmblood, needing patience & understanding, what colour would you be, & where do you see yourself? At a show, in a field on Snowdonia, winning Hickstead?

Of course as an icebreaker on this page this isn't an awful lot of good, so I'll simplify (sounds a bit like the tv program *The Cube*...).



What animal would you be, & why.....?



Fig. 4.2 Martin Compton, Screenshot of an ice-breaker activity using cloud-based presentation software (2018), CC BY 4.0

Later in the programme, many participants use the same cloud-based presentation software as a basis for their group task on developing a short, narrated presentation on an allocated learning theory.

While asynchronous communication tools offer flexibility regarding the time when a participant can read and respond to a comment, synchronous online communication can further enhance the feeling of belonging in a learning community and motivate participants further during seminar-type activities that take place at predetermined times. During the first module of the PGCert Programme, which covers theory of teaching, learning and assessment, an hourly webinar, which is conducted twice for flexibility in participation, aims to focus participants' learning around a certain topic and promote discussion around it. The webinars are initiated by two course tutors who frame

the weekly topic and pose relevant questions, encouraging participation and the sharing of views and experiences among the group.

Webinars are recorded and made available from Moodle for revision purposes, but also in order to make sure that any participants unable to attend the recordings are not disadvantaged.

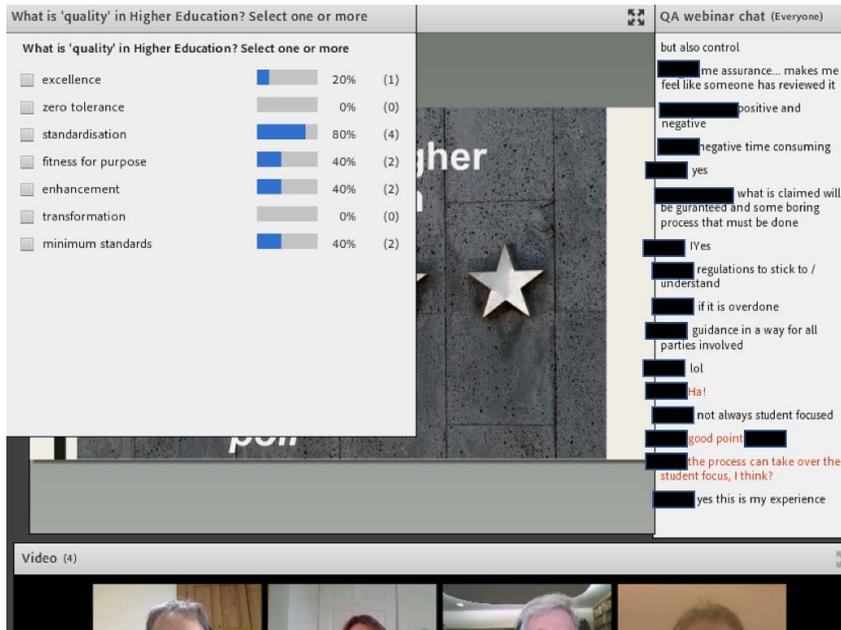


Fig. 4.3 Martin Compton, Screenshot of the web conferencing system in use (2018), CC BY 4.0

The web conferencing system is also used for group tutorials at pre-arranged times negotiated between the personal tutor and their group; during these, further, tailored advice and support is provided and participants have an opportunity to ask questions and discuss any potential issues with their assignments, or other aspects of the course.

The use of free, real-time online collaboration tools is also encouraged among study groups, so that participants can devise their plan on how to tackle their formative group tasks. Due to the limited licences associated with the main web-conferencing tool that we use, free, synchronous online collaboration tools are promoted; resources and support for

such online group collaboration is provided by our 'online tutor' of the PGCert programme.

We used a social network curation service that allows for stories/timelines to be harvested using Twitter and other online media to bring together some tweets from the course leader regarding lesson planning and learning objectives, and it was embedded in a Moodle page. Participants discussed their lesson plans, aims and objectives in the safe environment of the Moodle forum. In this way, participants had access to Twitter content outside of Twitter itself without the need for their own account. It exposed them to the concept of hashtags, curation, and the potential for utilising these tools in their own teaching. We find that Twitter use ranges from 10–20% in any given group of academics and there is always a lot of prejudice and assumption emanating from those who are non-users. Nevertheless, this use has certainly driven the initial application and the extension of use for teaching and learning purposes amongst the academics we work with.


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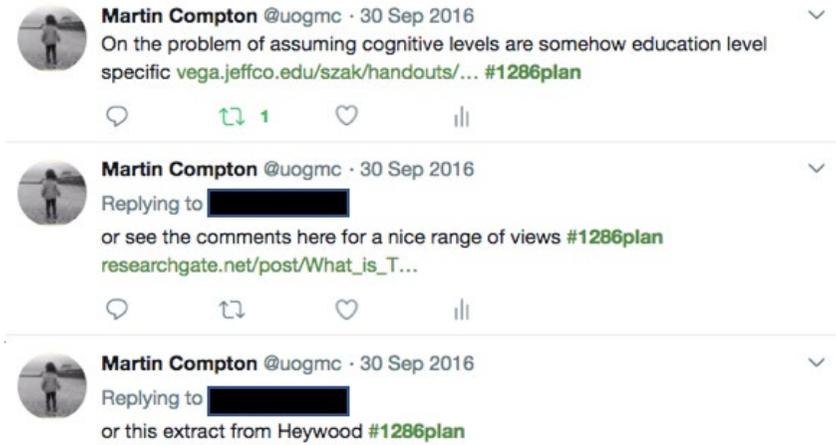



Fig. 4.4 Martin Compton, Curated content on Twitter which was subsequently re-curated with other online resources and then embedded in the VLE (2018), CC BY 4.0

Additionally, a Twitter aggregator is used to automatically share relevant, pre-defined content on a daily basis to further aid participants' understanding of the potential of this tool.

The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Daily

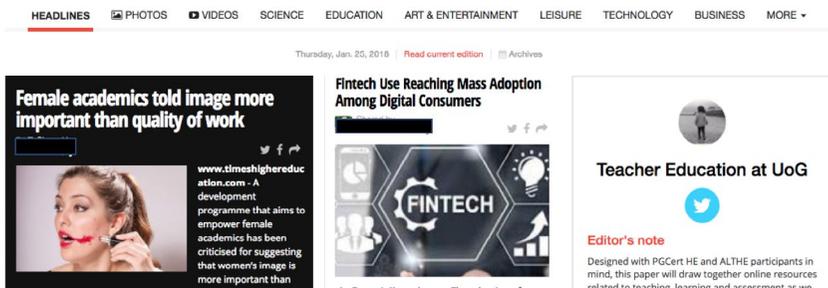


Fig. 4.5 Martin Compton, Screenshot of Twitter content aggregator (2018), CC BY 4.0

An online newsletter was used to collate some programme-related resources regarding peer observations, which is an integral part of the

programme. The same online newsletter has also been used to outline the way various online tools enhance the course, either by adding interactivity or by creating multimedia content. We are thus using tools that have interactive potential to illustrate and exemplify other tools that do the same. Numerous participants have gone on to use their choice of these tools with their own students.

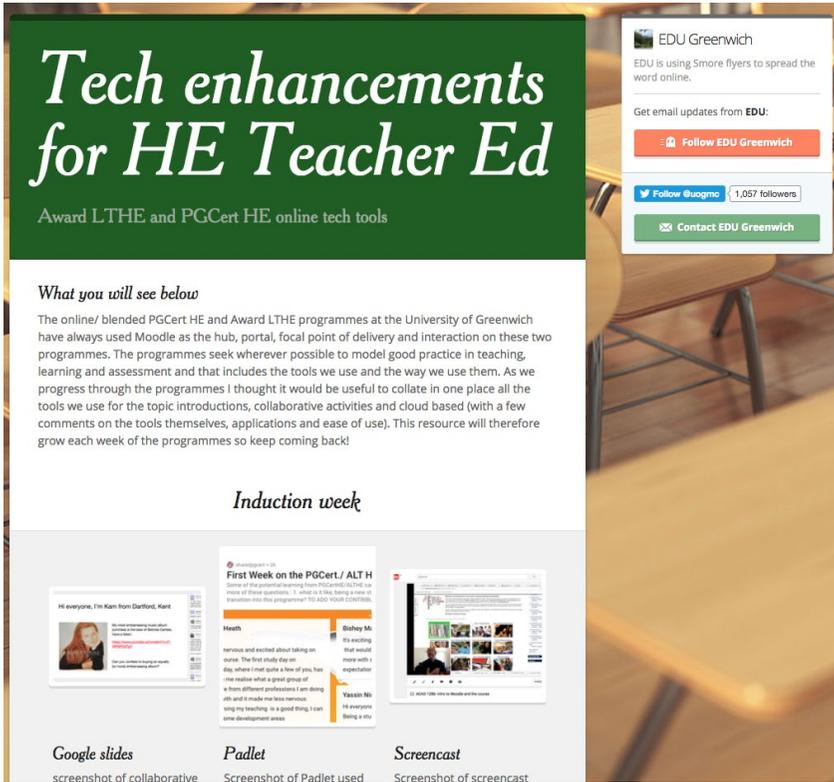


Fig. 4.6 Martin Compton, Newsletter for curation and exemplification with built in social media elements (2018), CC BY 4.0

It is important to note that all of the above tools were used in context to achieve our own teaching and learning goals on the PGCert programme as well as to raise participants’ awareness of the possibilities of adopting some of these tools in their own teaching practice. The development of the digital capabilities of participants is also a side-benefit of the course, due not only to its online nature but the fact that TEL is discussed explicitly as one of the topics. We focus on the pedagogical effectiveness

of TEL by modelling its use, rather than focusing on the technical aspects of the software, as there is often plenty of software solutions that can achieve similar outcomes and the lifecycle of free or freemium software has nowadays been significantly shortened.

Conclusion

Technology is embedded in all aspects of our lives including work and education and, for better or worse, it is one of the weapons in an academic developer's arsenal; while numerous studies have been published in the field of technology-enhanced learning, there is still some way to go before TEL becomes fully integrated into the student experience. From a staff development perspective, although there are certain minimum digital capabilities required in order for a lecturer to make good use of TEL, an open mind about the possibilities and a willingness to experiment to refresh one's practice are more important. This means that while training and support for institutional platforms may continue to be centralised, sharing knowledge about the pedagogically effective use of various cloud-based applications is very important too. Modified or re-engineered CPD opportunities offered to all staff as well as the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education or Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCert in HE/PCAP) course can be the vehicles for that, aiming to move TEL practices beyond the innovation and early-adoption stages.

Whilst it is virtually impossible to empirically measure the impact of the strategies we use, we are confident that the impact can be 'felt' when working with colleagues, and from the unsolicited comments and feedback we've received. A single CPD session in one faculty, for example, led to two attendees embracing one of the promoted social interaction tools. A recent visit to the same faculty's all-staff meeting found that the enthusiasm and willingness of those two relatively new lecturers to share examples in context have led to widespread take-up amongst colleagues who might be seen as 'hard to reach' as far as we, in the academic development team, are concerned. In terms of the PGCert, a 'TEL special issue' of our in-house journal featured contributions from three former participants who have used their experiences on the PGCert to embed social and interactive media in the face-to-face delivery of their

programmes. They experienced it, they adapted it, they presented it at conferences and subsequently published about it. As part of a relatively small team, we highly value this evident cascading and the willingness to disseminate via both formal and informal mechanisms.

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Glossary

Backchannel is an online conversation that happens at the same time as a specific event, such as a conference. The backchannel will often happen through Twitter where participants will share comments about the live event. They may also ask or answer specific questions and share related resources or links.

Blog is a website that displays content or posts in a chronological order.

Connectivism is a relatively new theory of how learning takes place in a digital environment. It proposes that learning does not just happen at an individual level but that learning and knowledge can develop outside of the individual through connections between organisations, the Internet, or even data.

Digital badges are indicators of a skill, accomplishment, quality or achievement earned in a learning environment. Badges earned can then be displayed on a social media site or app.

Facebook is the most well know of the social media sites, which enables users to share comments, links (on news or other content) and photos/videos across the Internet. This shared content can be with just close 'friends' or groups or made publicly available to everyone at a global level.

Facebook Live is a feature of Facebook that enables users to live-stream video recordings. After the live broadcast has been made, a recording will be posted and made permanently available.

GIF is an acronym for Graphics Interchange Format. They are a file type that can support static and animated images and are often used on Twitter and Facebook.

Github is a website that allows IT developers or groups of programmers to share and manage their code or projects and collaborate with others across the world.

Handle is a person's online identity and is often used as someone's user name of their social media account.

Hashtags are used in social media to identify messages on a specific topic, for example:

#iacanhazpdf — used on Twitter to request access to academic journal articles which are behind paywalls.

#LTHEchat — Learning and Teaching in Higher Education Twitter chat.

#DigPed — Digital pedagogy

#BYOD4L — 'Bring Your Own Device 4 Learning' course.

#12AoC — '12 Apps of Christmas' course.

Instagram is a photo and video sharing social media app. Users can share photos and videos which can then be edited using different filters and additional information can be added, such as tags or location information.

LinkedIn is mainly used as a professional networking website and app where employees advertise their vacancies and employees can post their CVs. It allows users to create profiles, post content and make connections with others using the service.

Lurking is being present in an online environment such a chatroom or Twitter chat but not participating in any interactions.

Meme refers to an image or video with a short piece of text, often with a humorous content, that is copied and distributed on social media platforms.

Medium is a website that publishes a wide variety of content, from personal blog posts to professional publications.

Moodle is an open-source virtual learning environment (VLE) used by education institutions to host content, deliver courses and facilitate blended and distance education.

MOOC is a Massive Open Online Course. These courses are fully online and have unlimited enrolment so they often have very large numbers of students on the course.

Open Education is the general outlook that educational resources and knowledge should be made freely accessible to all, and that we should aim to eliminate any barriers to achieve this goal. Promoting collaboration is a key feature of open education.

Phenomenography is a qualitative research methodology, usually based on interviews that aims to investigate the way people think or experience something. It emphasises the interviewee's reflection and description of experiences.

Pinterest is a visual social media service that allows users to share videos and images. Images are called 'pin's and they are put onto 'pinboards' which can be customised according to different themes and then followed by others.

Podcasts are a series of digital audio recordings that listeners can download or streamed to their device.

Snapchat is an app for sharing photos, videos and messages. Its distinctive feature is that once the message has been received via Snapchat it is automatically deleted.

Tag is a keyword or phrase added to a social media post with the purpose of relating it to a category or collection.

Twalk is a structured walk augmented by the use of social media (usually Twitter). Participants will walk around a specified route, discussing a nominated topic(s) and use Twitter to enhance the discussions or debates.

Tweet Wall is an app or platform that displays tweets which include a specified hashtag. They are often displayed on a large screen within a populated area, such as a conference or classroom.

Twitter is a service that enables its users to publish short messages (up to 280 characters) called tweets. These tweets enable users to communicate with one another, share links/photos/videos and publicise events.

Twitter chat (or tweetchat) is usually a live event focused around a specific topic. The chat is usually based on a single hashtag.

Visitors and Residents is a simple way of visually plotting users' engagement in online environments. It maps their engagement with online tools on a continuum from visitors to residents depending upon their level of activity.

VLE is a virtual learning environment, it is an online space where learning materials and teaching/learning tools are hosted. Examples include, Moodle, Blackboard and Canvas.

WhatsApp is a messenger app, similar to a text messenger service, which allows the user to send messages, audio, images and videos. It also has features like group chatting and voice messaging.

WordPress is open source software that is often used as a blog.

List of Illustrations

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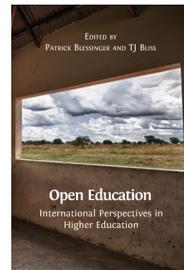
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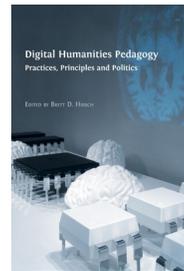


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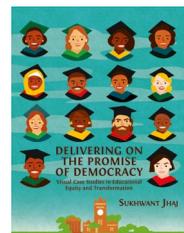


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