



Podcast Transcript – Cardonald College

In this podcast Grainne Hamilton RSC eAssessment Advisor talks to Kenneth Park from Cardonald College who talks about how he has been using WIKI software to engage tourism students. WIKIs are being used by students for research, planning, collaborative work and assessment.

A few seconds of music introduces the podcast.

Grainne: I'm here with Kenneth Park, Senior lecturer in Travel & Tourism at Cardonald College in Glasgow. Kenneth will be talking about his experience using WIKIs with travel and tourism students.

Hi Kenny – can you tell us a bit about the college and your role there.

Kenneth: Yes sure. I'm a senior lecturer in travel and tourism at the college for half the week, and I'm involved in teaching HN classes mainly years 1 & 2 and for the second half of the week I'm seconded as a learning technologist where I help academic staff develop web based learning solutions. Basically try to help them bring technology into their teaching practice. So I'm quite lucky – I get the best of both worlds, I'm able to try things in my own classes and then things that work well, I can pass on to others in the college and that's a role I've been involved in for the past 5 years.

Grainne: Why did you decide to use WIKIs with your students – what did you hope to achieve?

Kenneth: I was interested in using WIKIs for students learning about travel geography. Traditionally students came to us with very poor map skills, poor awareness of places around about them and we taught this in a very traditional way. Paper base materials, with Atlases and I was aware of some fantastic resources available on the internet and I wanted to provide one place where I could give the students access to these resources. So I set up a WIKI using the free online tool from WIKISpaces and it allowed me to bring in e.g. Google Maps, so instead of the student passively looking at a map, they were able to navigate round, zoom into places, change the view. I was also able to incorporate You Tube videos within the WIKI so instead of them listening to me talking about somewhere they could have a tour round the streets of that destination and see the highlights in a very clear and entertaining way. It allowed me to integrate Flickr slideshows so they were able to see some fantastic photos of tourist destinations and it also allowed me to embed some ICT learning e.g. I was able to link out to Google docs so they could do some work with spreadsheets there in

relation to temperature and rainfall graphs and it meant that I was able to improve the student experience in that particular class.

Grainne: Did you find that students had any difficulties with using the WIKI. Did they have any additional training or support needs?

Kenneth: Yes – I was surprised. The group I was working with was an intermediate 1 level and I was really staggered at the lack of IT skills that were there. With the first group I had problems initially getting email accounts set up. I asked them to do that themselves and it didn't work very well so there were barriers with people lacking the basic skills and that was compounded by the fact that initially the WIKI can be a bit intimidating so as I rolled it out to other classes I ensured there was a very strong induction process for the students.

Grainne: Were there any other challenges? Institutional challenges for example?

Kenneth: Yes – you're relying on there being computers available, the speed of connection, data projection facilities which is not always the case, particularly with big classes. It wasn't possible for students to share PCs, each student had their own page on the WIKI so they couldn't double up. If your internet connection goes down and you have a two hour class, well all your eggs are in one basket so to speak.

Grainne: Did you find you were able to overcome these challenges. Could you bring the students along with you if you had these problems?

Kenneth: Yes – I learned every time I did it. Each time I used the WIKI, fundamentally it was the same class I was doing it with, this geography class where I wanted them to look at images, videos and maps but each time I got better at it so some lessons I learned were that I took the email address from the students and then set up the accounts for them in WIKIspaces. I'd make sure that I had the right type of room and check the room beforehand and make sure everything was working OK. As time went on and with each subsequent class the experience improved for me and the students.

Grainne: So did you find that it was really beneficial to use WIKIs for this particular activity.

Kenneth: I don't have any firm evidence or proven results but anecdotally the students told me that they enjoyed the class and *appeared* to enjoy the class more. There's been a long history of students really disliking working with atlases and maps. Again anecdotally I used a WIKI to support a study visit to Prague with various activities they had to do before they went, basically some desk research and when we got there we were walking about on the first day and I heard one of the students say to another – look there's that dancing house, which is a famous building in Prague and I thought they've seen that in the WIKI, they recognise it and I was quite pleased with that.

Grainne: Did you use the WIKI for assessment purposes?

Kenneth: Yes. I used it for both formative and summative assessments. In this type of subject its important that the students could view as much material as possible, including the work of their class mates. So the students were preparing portfolios really on specific tourist destinations so I wanted then to see each other's work, but bizarrely because they could see their classmates work, and they know that I can as well, it actually reduced the incidence of plagiarism and copying work from classmates. I thought it was really good that they could see what others were doing and give their own take on it. So the assessments were there, the students made their portfolios. The portfolios were verified internally through our own quality system and also externally verified by the SQA. Again we were very please with the results there. Clearly it depends on the subject but for this it worked well.

Grainne: Do you think being able to see their peers work helped students to benchmark themselves against others?

Kenneth: I hadn't thought of it from that point of view, you've raised an interesting point. If you have a strong group dynamic and you have a strong work ethic and if the standard was generally high, students who might be likely to slack might be pulled along in a positive way. It's something I didn't see any evidence of but to be honest I wasn't really looking for that. I'll maybe consider that the next time.

Grainne: So what are the next steps for you? Are you going to continue to use this?

Kenneth: Yes I think I would. At the start of January we've a European and Mediterranean geography class and there are a number of other tools now that are available that could be embedded in the WIKI. There are tools that allow you to post your trip using a social media format. I think this would be really good. The students could pull together maps, photos, video and hopefully something that would engage the students. For certain types of classes now I would always think of the WIKI first. The great and exciting thing about it is that because things are changing so quickly on the internet, any new technology can be slotted in and I would always be looking to bring in something new.

Grainne: If anyone else was thinking of using WIKIs do you have any advice?

Kenneth: Yes a few things. I would urge people to take control over setting up the accounts. The reality is that if you can get emails and set the accounts up for the students so that when they start the class the first time they just simply log in using the details that you give them.

I would provide a really strong induction. I think it's common sense and well known now that unless you do that you can lose people very quickly and its difficult to pull that situation back.

I wouldn't assume that the users have even basic IT skills and you might have to embed some initial basic ICT training or you might need to be very wary in the class and be aware that some individuals may have difficulty with basic tasks.

I would also be aware that some people may be doing a bit of copying and when you see that you need to knock it on the head at an early stage and intervene quickly. Really down to good classroom management.

Another thing I would advise is to give a lot of praise – the students love to show you what they have done and going round looking at their works and praising their work and they respond really well to the positive feedback.

I would say to people that the applications a free, persevere they have great potential for learning.

Grainne: Thanks very much Kenny