

Joan Walker: Thanks for taking the time to listen to this podcast – I’m Joan Walker and I work for the JISC Regional Support Centre in the west of Scotland – our remit is to support the innovative use of technology for learning & teaching and today I’m at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow with:

Mary Troup who is a Lecturer and the Community Music Co-ordinator and Andrew Comrie who is Programme Leader for the Post Graduate Certificate in Learning & Teaching in Higher Arts Education at the Academy.

Thanks for joining me this morning. The focus of this podcast is to look at the impact of using social media in particular WIKI software with community music students.

First of all I’d like to ask you Mary what challenges you had with that group of students.

Mary: One of the challenges was that the student wanted to gain more experience in complex project management and leadership. I was aware that part of the work they are required to do is to document their practice and I wanted to initiate more project based placement was to focus on how we could make the documentation of the practice more collaborative and more visible both to the student and to other people who might be witnessing their work or who would want to learn from their work. At the same time I wanted to enrich our community of practice. I had become aware that I knew everyone within the community but other people didn’t know other groups that were part of the community and therefore the learning that was taking place wasn’t really fulfilling its potential. Through research I had come across Etienne Wenger’s work on communities of practice but also his work on technology that would support communities of practice and it occurred to me that through introducing WIKI technology we would be able to make the documentation of placement practice more visible and also make it more available.

Joan: And also to be quite media rich?

Mary: Yes – I know that a lot of our community partners find it difficult to access ways of teaching music particularly composition and it occurred to me that if we could make it more rich in different media that we could use sound files and look at how we could use imagery. For example one of the projects is based on the theme of Glasgow so we took that Glasgow coat of arms and the motto of “Let Glasgow Flourish” to make that initially into a chant that we worked on with the children and we could actually, through different media, illustrate the processes that we were going through.

Joan: And did the WIKI meet your expectations?

Mary: Very much – well it took a while. Initially I was very challenged and went through many attempts to try to do things before I succeeded. It was only when I started meeting with the students and pin pointing aspects of their experience in their journals and suggesting I put it onto the WIKI and I could begin to see the materials taking shape and to an extent that I felt satisfied with what was taking shape and then encouraging students to have a look at what I’d put there and

their response of realising it was something that they could use now and also in the future. I think once that happened there was a turning point and all our confidence levels went up – probably at the same time.

Joan: Andrew we were talking about the impact of using the technology and this model of implementation on the institution as a whole.

Andrew: Mary and I got to know each other when Mary took part in the Academy's PGCert in Teaching in Higher Arts Education. We are now in the 4th year of running the programme. There's been about 35 staff have been through it or are going through it and the final module of that programme is for my students to redesign an aspect of their curriculum then deliver and evaluate it. And of course PGCert gives us real opportunity to drip feed ideas about technology-enhanced education. Importantly it also allows us an opportunity to develop some pedagogical notions about student centred learning, around ideas situated within social constructivism, around notions like peer learning, and around things like learner created resources or rather learners in the co-creation of resources. I really think Mary's work is a great example of learners being very active in the co-creation of resources.

It's now in the second iteration, the lessons learned from the first pilot have been reviewed, the training, induction and preparedness of learners to take part in a technology enhanced learning experience has been fully understood and big changes made to the induction to the work placement and there is a real difference this time between the pilot and this year where students are very actively now engaged in uploading their own materials to the WIKI and there is a real sense of ownership which is facilitated by Mary.

Joan: Tia was saying earlier in the other podcast that the peer learning aspect and a real community of practice spanning the years is important. Because they have the WIKI from last year they can look back at what was involved how things were done and speak to others about aspects of the placement etc... These were things that perhaps you didn't anticipate?

Mary: No. I hadn't really thought about it from that perspective and also from the perspective of the materials being useful for teachers CPD. All of that has emerged; an emergent outcome that wasn't anticipated.

Andrew: And this characterises what a community of practice is all about.

Mary: Yes indeed, you know if different members in the Community of Practice might never have met each other can witness the work and recognise its value and begin to use it the possibilities are endless.

Andrew: All of this becomes a real example of how technology can be used in the teaching of music and drama. Music and drama are not traditionally the early adopters of using technology for teaching and learning, I think it's fair to say, but through PGCert and the project work we now have a number of really good case studies of how technology can be used in conservatoire music and drama training. Its also I think helped to evolve institutional strategy around teaching &

learning and informed a process of curriculum reform. The people that have had this kind of experience are able to influence curriculum design and now in phase two are able to see how technologies can be better embedded in conservatoire delivery model taking the new course framework forward. When we started all of this three years ago there wasn't an institutional Virtual Learning Environment at RSAMD and there was very little technology used in everyday teaching practice. There was no expertise in terms dedicated professional staff to support technology enhanced learning and now all these things are in place so there have been some really interesting strategic developments at the Academy as a result of this type of work.

Mary: I think one of the other things is that because through the WIKI technology we can make the documentation richer and more authentic it has led to the possibilities of students getting their work published. Last year we were able to support two students to write an illustrated article based on their work that was published.

Joan: Maybe through experiences like this you would be much more likely to look for technology solutions to meet your pedagogic needs.

Mary: Absolutely. There is a particular blog that I follow and I had a look the other day and they were talking about a software package called Storybirds. We were focussing on story telling with music with the second year students this term so I had a look at Storybirds and thought – well here's another aspect to technology where the students can work with the children to pick images so they are actually using individual images as a catalyst to create an original story and then they can use it write music and lyrics and create a whole package that is visually attractive, created together with the young people and that can have original music.

Joan: I imagine in schools there is even more potential to integrate different aspects of the curriculum into one project as well.

Mary: Yes, particularly with the Curriculum for Excellence coming in now. We're not just working with music in its own right but we're looking to see how literacy projects or in a history project or social project – how can a musical approach be used to develop those ideas.

Joan: I think what really struck me though was this idea of visibility that you talked about and making it so visible makes it much more accessible for the pupils and teachers in the schools and your own students here at the Academy.

Mary: What I'm realising is that as the WIKI develops and we develop our resource materials it also becomes a teaching tool that is embedded within community music but hopefully might be used as an exemplar for teachers in other areas.

Joan: I think maybe the fact that a lot of it is user generated as you were saying Andrew – it's not going to be perfect, it's very "do-able" for the people that are looking at it.

Andrew: And that I think does reflect the kind of things that are emerging with Web2.0 technologies more generally. We used to get very hung up in the early days of technology enhanced learning that it had to be almost BBC quality, but with the emergence of things like You Tube - that's not where we are now. Its about making stuff visible.

Joan: Well I'll bring this podcast to a close now and thanks you both very much for joining me here at the Academy. Thanks.