Giving voice to learners: using private blogs to develop self-reflection

HRAMIAK, A., BOULTON, H. and IRWIN, B.

Published version

HRAMIAK, A., BOULTON, H. and IRWIN, B. (2008). Giving voice to learners: using private blogs to develop self-reflection. In: Association for Learning Technology (ALT) Conference, Leeds, 9-11 September 2008.

Repository use policy

Giving voice to learners: using private blogs to develop self-reflection

Helen Boulton – helen.boulton@ntu.ac.uk

Dr Alison Hramiak – a.hramiak@shu.ac.uk

Brian Irwin – b.irwin@shu.ac.uk

Overview

- Background and context

- What we did – methods of data collection

- The findings from the two institutions

- The analysis – reflection and development

- What next – future research projects and follow up

The Main Messages:

- Development of deeper reflection, and much broader reflective practice

- Development of reflective practitioners

- Sharing of reflections and personal development

- Developing a community of practice for reflection

- Increasingly independent reflections

Background

- 1/3 in university and 2/3 in schools on two separate placements

- Sheffield Hallam and Nottingham Trent Universities over the last 18 months in the use of reflective diaries with Education students using a web log (blog).

- Previous research on reflection using public blogs found the openness of blogs limited the reflection that took place inside them (Divintini et al., 2005 & Oti and Clarke, 2007)

- Private blogs for self-reflection on professional development – accessed by lecturers during the year to provide feedback on reflections

- Small action research case study, data collected included blog transcripts, (with permission from trainees and assurance of anonymity), interviews with trainees and questionnaires

So what's a blog then...?

- A blog is a <u>user-generated</u> website where entries are made in <u>journal</u> style and usually displayed in a reverse <u>chronological order</u>.

- **Benefits**
  - Can upload text, images, videos, sound
  - Blog spaces are usually customisable
  - Individualised
  - Can comment
  - Notification of new entries
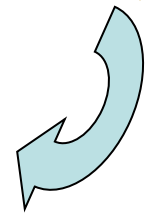
it's a random name generator, I have found it works really well getting all the class looking in one direction as they are somewhat kept on their toes.

Link   **2 comments**|Leave a comment

Starter activities   [Dec. 5th, 2007|**09:15 am**]

Hello,

I was pointed to by a teacher at my placement school, to a folder FULL of starter activities related to DIDA (but could easily be applicable to BTEC and just about anything to). Thought I would share these with you, as I don't know if anyone is like me but I am struggling to keep my starters and plenary's shorter than 10 minutes...this for me then knocks the timing of the lesson out.

I think these may cure it though. I have uploaded them to my own webspace which can be found here:

http://www.meangasoline.co.uk/starters/

There are 48 in total I do believe.

I will make them available to download for you all until June time when the course finishes, after which I will take the folder down. All the files added together only equal 8mb so it might be worth downloading them?

Hope you are all well, I will post a full blog entry soon.

Link   Leave a comment

Why do it?

- An alternative to reflective journals/diaries – use of media appropriate for trainees and increase in digital fluency

- Support work based placements

- Tutors can comment on blogs to provide formative feedback

- Collaborative opportunity to use two similar cohorts to compare findings

- Potential for cascading use in schools

- A lens on reflection is provided by windows of opportunity either by or through blogs

Data Collection

- Two sets of blogs collected for each cohort in each institution

- Statistical data on number and dates of entries

- Trainees interviewed at the end of the year

- Analysis based on literature review – thematic approach
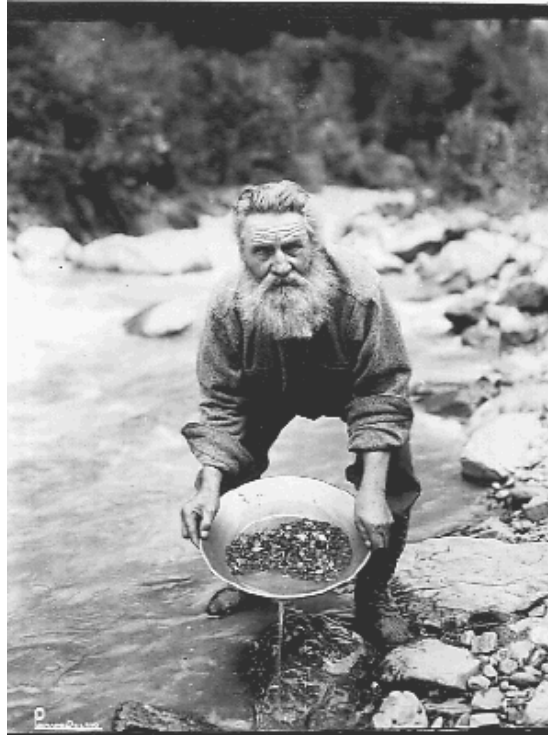
- Questionnaire
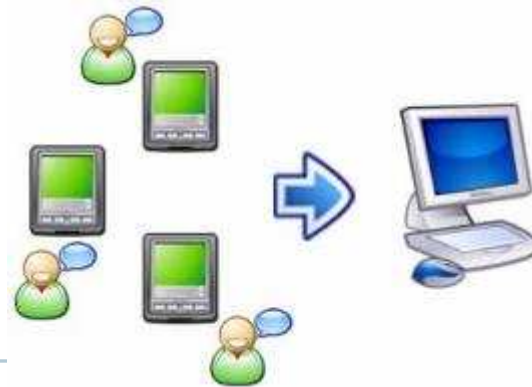
Analysis of data

- Thematic analysis of blog transcripts – (Oti and Clarke 2007)

- Development as a reflective practitioner

- Emerging professional identity as a teacher

Findings – did we strike gold?

Findings

Reflective practice entries variable – from descriptive to truly reflective, and this also improves towards the end of the second placement. Some are very good at this by the end of the course – critical, reflective, analytical and evaluative.

Evidence of development as professionals within transcripts

Builds up through both placements –a definite progression seen

What they said in terms of reflective practice…

- "[…]in recent weeks [I] have been more decisive. I feel that as a result, students are more responsive and more productive."

- "but I find myself a lot more patient than I use to be!…"

- "I feel I have a better understanding of the goals of each course…"

What they said in terms of development as professionals…

- "[…]they address me as 'miss'"

- "[…]they see me as being in charge as opposed to a teaching assistant"

- "At TP2 students see me as just another teacher".
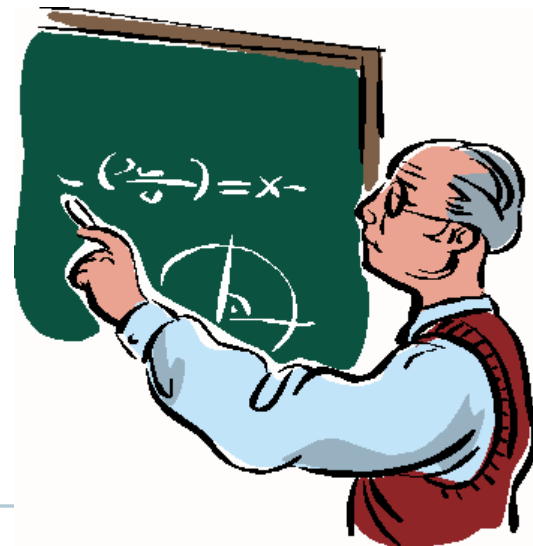
And from the interviews…

- The blogs were ok "for that touchy feely rubbish".

- They gave a "broader view".

- "Evaluation on the lesson plan was more descriptive and different from the blog because the blog had more on progression over the weeks".
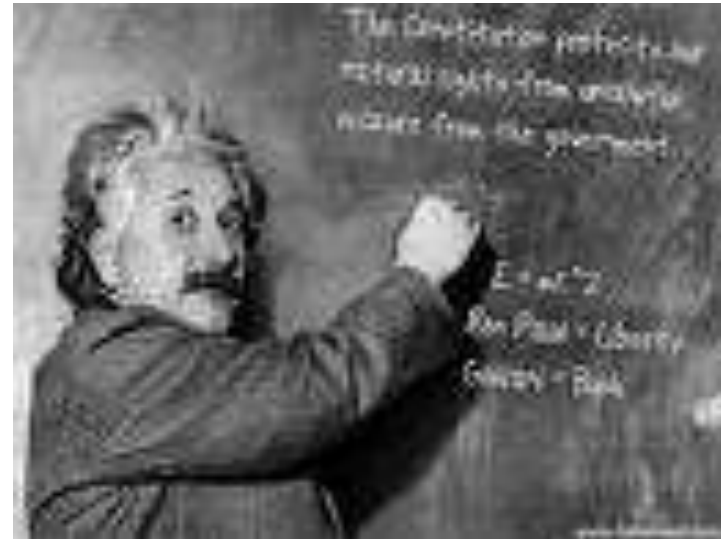
Overall the Findings

- Very positive from both institutions

- Some issues of double entries

- Private blogs allowed formative feedback to develop better reflection

- Limitations – sample size, ICT level of trainees was already high so no barrier there

Work in Progress: Futures

- Go to second phase and see if the use is cascaded in schools

- Iterative – to inform practice for future cohorts

- Changes to our practice

- Disseminate via seminars and conferences to other PGCEs and similar distance based learning programmes

- Included in M level assessment

- Community blogs – benefits, emoticons, images/photos, support

- Potential for studying the impact of more frequent tutor feedback during a blog

The Main Messages:

- Development of deeper reflection, and much broader reflective practice

- Development of reflective practitioners

- Sharing of reflections and personal development

- Developing a community of practice for reflection

- Increasingly independent reflections

References

- Divintini, M., Haugalokken, O., & Morken, E. (2005). *Blog to support learning in the field: lessons learned from a fiasco*. Paper presented at the Fifth IEEE International Conference on Advanced Learning Technologies (ICALT).

- Oti, J., & Clarke, R. (2007). *Dyslexia and online writing: Student teachers experiences of writing about themselves in a public forum*. Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference.
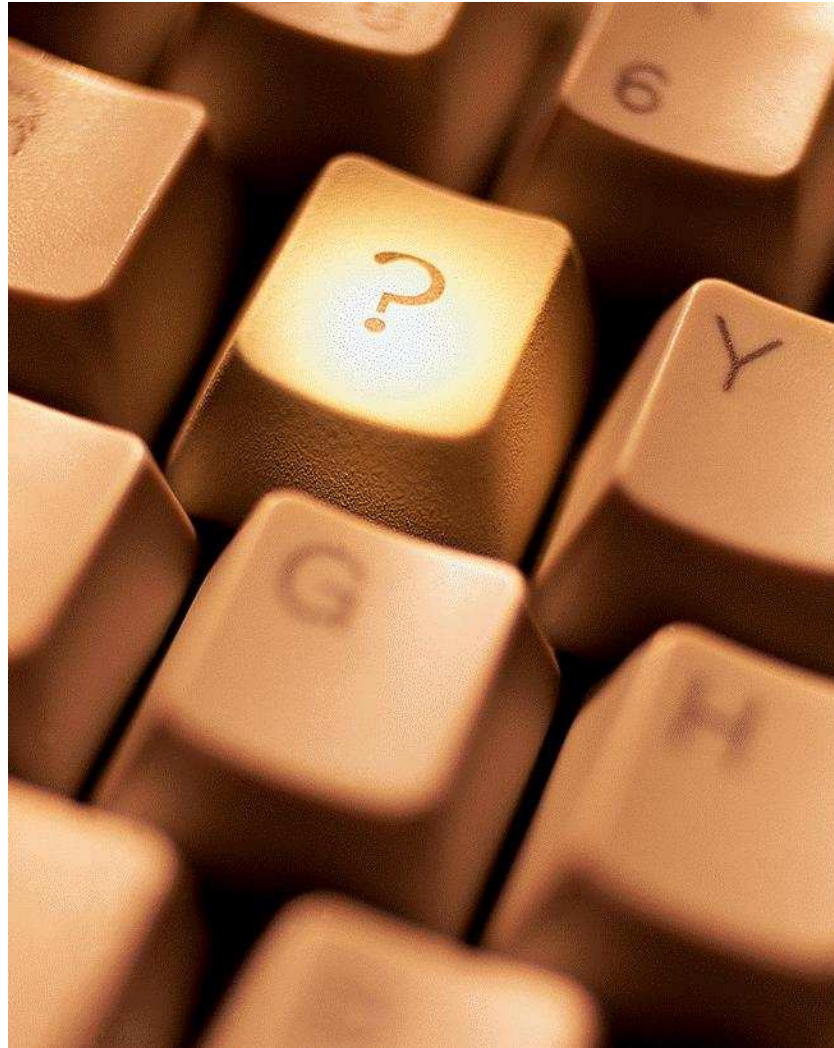
Sheffield
Hallam University

NTU

Any Questions?