

THE 6th Journal

**Full reports of
Action Research
Projects**



Foreword:

The 2005/6 academic year was a highly successful one for practitioner research in the college. Five member of staff carried out projects in diverse areas, and each of these have sparked interest and curiosity among other colleagues about strategies which can be used to improve learner's motivation and to engage them in the learning process. These projects have been written up in a format which seeks to ground the ideas in some background theory but also in a personalised way which hopefully other teachers will find accessible and will be able to relate to their own practice. If, having read the reports, you are inspired to find out more, I am sure that the relevant members of staff would be happy to speak about their projects. Alternatively, you may have an idea for a project yourself, which you can talk to me about.

David Godfrey
Senior Project Leader

**The Guide from the Side,
Not the Sage on the Stage**

The Use of ICLT to Motivate Learners

Nicola Franklin



INTRODUCTION

Aims

To explore the ways teachers can motivate students using ICLT in the classroom

Setting the Scene:

Inspiring motivation through ICLT in the classroom

The EI element of the research has been narrowed to focus specifically on motivation and the impact of specific changes to the teaching resources - namely a clear focus on a selection of ICLT resources which work together in a variety of ways. Media lessons are like any other in the sense that they occur within a typical 6th form classroom. The key difference is the opportunity for multi-media content and resources to be used. To what extent is the use of ICLT during these lessons a factor in motivating the students? With all the good will, entertainment value, subject knowledge, preparation, resources, time, enthusiasm in the world it doesn't mean the students are learning anything and we must add to this list the ability to motivate students to learn. Can the use of ICLT be helpful here? We should not underestimate the power of ICLT as a democratising force in education and the significance it will have in the future learning environment. While the activities and technologies used during this research project are limited in comparison to some of the larger studies and developments currently underway it is safe to assume that ICLT in the classroom is going to become a fundamental part of the student experience and that it is very important to be aware of the developments taking place and to be considering how to integrate them into our teaching repertoire.

"At a national level government initiatives in all four UK countries have promoted e-learning as a means of empowering and engaging learners. Increasingly, they also focus on the practitioner as an active 'innovator' of new practices and techniques."

(JISC, Effective practice with e-learning: a good practice guide in designing for learning, 2004)

Possible resources which could be used

smart board, wireless keyboard and mouse, VLE, internet, interactive voting pads, document viewer, blogging, tablet pc, video-conferencing/web-cam, you-tube, sound recording, video camera, digital still camera, editing software (i-movie), creative software packages (Photoshop, poser, flash ...), pod-casting, web-radio,

Theoretical context

The focus of the research is building the motivation of the students. To understand motivation we must recognise that there are two forces at work; as the Behaviourists Watson and Skinner both identified during the 1930s a person moves towards pleasure/reward and away from pain or more recently - 'intrinsic rewards' and 'extrinsic rewards' Mullins (*management and organisational behaviour*, 1999). These motivating forces may be described as follows: Intrinsic (psychological) - achievement, interest, feeling valued and Extrinsic (social) - test scores, competition, rewards, sanctions, fear of failure, variety of teaching methods. The extrinsic may be seen as the motivational force of the teacher, the intrinsic may be seen as the motivating force of the student themselves. The use of ICLT to encourage a sense of ownership and control over the students' learning

In developing the use of ICLT in the classroom one must be aware of the differing experiences of the students - while some students are highly ICLT literate others are completely technophobic, pitching the activities at the right level for active participation and learning will be crucial. As Harkin, Turner and Dawn (*teaching young adults, 2001*) have pointed out motivation and participation act together and all learning is a relationship between *confirmation* and *challenge* It is on this continuum that all teaching must operate

confirmation ← **challenge**

“confirmation - the recognition that the learners previous and preferred learning style are valid in their own right within the context of where the learning is taking place ... challenge - progress is proportionate to a realistic level of challenge and most people will accept a challenge if it is attainable”

As a teacher, I am concerned with how technology may be a new challenge for the students whilst providing an opportunity for them to develop their own sense of motivation (intrinsic rewards).

Young people are often the first adopters and trend leaders when it comes to using technology – for many this is an area of their lives they have natural inclination and motivation to know about. By tapping into their existing interests and motivations can we inspire them to learn?

“By understanding where a child is coming from you can use the motivation he or she naturally has anyway and creatively adapt it to your own subject. I have yet to meet a child who isn’t motivated, sometimes they just aren’t motivated to do what we want them to do when we want them to do it.” (Ian Gilbert, Essential motivation in the classroom, 2003)

METHOD 1

Implementation

The final module studied in the AS year is called ‘Audiences and Institutions’, the focus during this module is New Media Technologies (mobile phones, HDTV, internet etc) and because the content of the course focuses on contemporary developments in technology there is a clear opportunity to link the content of the course with the mode of delivery. Thereby using new technology to teach new technology and considering whether this encourages the students to be more motivated. Some of the technologies are already familiar to the students whilst some technologies have only been used in a limited number of ways from the students perspective. I have chosen to make use of familiar technologies which are usually used by the teacher but to focus the use on the students in the hope that the students will have some confidence in how the technology works whilst also having the challenge of using it themselves and seeing an increase in a personal sense of purpose, responsibility and overall motivation.

Teaching strategies

Creating group glossary of key terms using wireless keyboard and mouse allowing the students to contribute with confidence from their seat in the group

Method of data collection

post-its

FINDINGS 1

Results

the feedback from the group falls into 2 categories

positive feedback:

interactive	
more relaxed	
engaging	
Everyone can participate	
fun	
No wires to get twisted	
Good to be able to move away from the screen	
I can embarrass myself from where I am sitting instead of in front of the whole class	

negative feedback

slow	
range is limited	
Takes too long to pass round	
Not everyone is participating in the activity at the same time	

Analysis

33 + responses

22 – responses

The students were disappointed by the limited range of the keyboard and mouse and considering we were in the smallest classroom in the department students sometimes still had to move a little in order to get a signal (16 responses). However, they were pleased by the interactivity (7 responses) and level of participation (7 responses) which the keyboard and mouse created. This level of positive response is very encouraging and it seems the only real downside was the range at which the keyboard and mouse could successfully operate – a technical hitch rather than any real criticism of the concept. It seems important to consider the trade-off between the motivating nature of the technology and the de-motivating implications of technical limitations and things going wrong.

METHOD 2

Creating research 'Blogs' online

Students created their own case study research resource allowing students to personalise their information and for me to respond with similarly tailored feedback



Method of data collection

focus group – whole class

FINDINGS 2

Students were enthusiastic about the clear connection between the subject and the method of research and assessment. Some of the students were relatively technophobic and while willing to try the technology they became resistant to it when they found they were experiencing technical difficulties which meant they lost the work they had done. Other students were more confident using the 'blog' site and were more willing to make use of the slightly more advanced features such as adding pictures, sounds and videos. The flexibility of using a blog site as the base for all their research made sense to the students as all their research would be sourced from the internet they could easily add their findings and links to relevant sites very easily. The ease with which I could assess their progress was beneficial to them and the fact that I was creating a blog while they were creating theirs gave the students a base from which to start new tasks. Most students found the blog activity engaging and they became more interested in it as their research progressed and they could see what they had achieved.

Analysis

The ownership over their own research and the control they had over how their blog looked and how it worked was motivating, however some students were de-motivated by technology they were unfamiliar with and found the challenge of new content as well as new technology too much. It seems important to allow the students to make the choice about which challenges they engage in and which they do not. Motivation must come through choice – everyone is motivated by different factors.

METHOD 3

Creating group mind maps and presenting them to the group via the smart board.

Students used wireless keyboard and mouse to construct a mind map for the whole class

Method of data collection

Poll

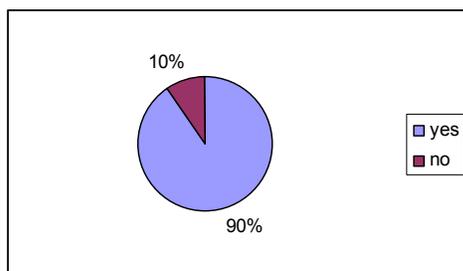
FINDINGS 3

positive

Yes, I think this exercise motivated me to participate - 18

negative

no I do not think this exercise motivated me to participate – 2



Analysis

Providing the students with the words which they needed to fit into the mind-map ensured that they covered all the relevant issues. The students could take it in turns to manipulate the mind-map adding strands and moving words around. The students had an opportunity to think about which words they wanted to use and where before they were given the mouse and keyboard. Such an overwhelmingly positive result to this poll was surprising. The students who said that they were not motivated to participate explained that they were sometimes frustrated by what other people were doing and that they did not agree with them.

METHOD 4

Group essay planning using smart board and wireless keyboard and mouse

Students contributed ideas and edited the group essay plans from their position in the room. The students were asked to take an essay question identify key ideas individually and then in groups before feeding back their potential plan to the whole class.

Method of data collection

Anecdotal

FINDINGS 4

Students seemed enthusiastic about using wireless keyboard and mouse again – they are now very familiar with the technology and everyone has used it at least once. Students were aware of the limitations with regard to the range at which the keyboard and mouse could work and adjusted themselves automatically. Students worked individually then in groups preparing a possible essay plan the class discussion which followed was aiming to create an ‘ultimate’ essay plan which would be unique to the group and saved in the shared area for them to access again later and adapt for them to use whilst doing the essay for homework.

The discussion was lively and sometimes heated as the students argued for their changes to be made. The technology was automatically passed from group to group as they made decisions about a group’s contribution. The fact that they did not have to get out of their seats to make changes seemed a clear factor supporting the smooth transition from group to group and suggestion to suggestion.

Analysis

The democratic situation which arose during this session was very encouraging. Students felt more able to contribute because the focus was on the smart board and on the groups rather than on their specific contribution to the discussion.

METHOD 5

Using internet to research

Use of the IT suite provided an opportunity to access internet resources which were then evaluated and selected to form part of their case-study – used in conjunction with the blogging task.

Method of data collection

Observation

FINDINGS 5

Students maintained their attention on the task at hand and all of the students found at least 1 source and all found at least 1 relevant piece of information.

1 student had technical issues due to limited storage space on user area. 2 students required direction as to appropriate search terms.

Analysis

The students were given a time frame and a clear focus for their research and specific criteria with which to select the most appropriate sources, they could choose exactly what they wanted to look for based on what they had decided their case-studies were. The students were provided a computer each. The students stayed on task throughout the activity and all students ended with useful findings.

METHOD 6

Revision game using smart board

'Monopoly' inspired game where the counters move around a 'virtual' board on the smart board the students are required to answer a subject specific question before they can progress. This revision task is designed to test their understanding of the theory and concepts found in the Audiences and Institutions module whilst also providing a reminder of those concepts through using the game; for example the game could be played so that the teams must build a horizontally integrated company or a global company by buying particular squares on the board.

As in 'Monopoly' teams must take it in turns to try to buy squares on the board using game money. Each member of the team takes a turn to play and answer a question or opt to pay more money but confer with their team.

Method of data collection

Video/anecdotal

FINDINGS 6

The students were excited by the prospect of using a game as part of their revision. They were impressed by the time and effort which had gone in to creating the game for them to use and were appreciative of this. During game play students were very vocal and engaged - a sense of team spirit was beginning to develop. They became increasingly competitive and were keen to beat the other teams and to answer their questions for them. Everyone was participating in the game and was looking to support one another to ensure the teams' overall success. The use of the smart board and the perceived fun of the activity encouraged the students while the team aspect along with the sense that this was a different way to assess their learning seemed to inspire them. They were keen to play again.

Analysis

The students appeared highly motivated by this activity and felt the use of technology was part of this motivation although the structure of the activity and the team aspect were considered more important to their level of motivation.

METHOD 7

Document viewer

electronic document viewer in connection with smart board allowed students to view functions of portable new media technologies

Method of data collection

Interview x3

FINDINGS 7

key comments included

"what's the point? We could just pass the phone around"

"it's a glorified OHP"

"why don't you just film yourself using the phone then play it on the smart board?"

"you can't see things properly- it's hard to focus and position what we are looking at"

"you can't get the camera far enough away"

"useful if there is a larger number of students"

"if we are looking at a document you might as well just scan it in or search the internet"

"the screen is too small"

"it's awkward, the power cable isn't long enough and I can't work out which way to move it so you can see things"

"it's good if you have something really small and fiddly"

"seems good for when students bring things in to show but not for teachers to use"

"I wouldn't bother with it"

Analysis

The students are very clear about when this technology would be of benefit. Students were very quick to recognise the potential downfalls and having used the technology were not positive about using it again unless it was the most appropriate method of displaying things to a group. This technology could be more beneficial if it had recording and microphone functions to allow students to use it as a method of presentation which they could prepare in advance. They did not consider this particular technology to be motivating in fact they viewed it as a bit redundant.

OVERALL FINDINGS

Some increase in level of motivation was perceived as well as positive feelings towards using technologies now they had had a chance to experience them first hand.

- Increased level of confidence using ICT resources - less technophobic
- more willing to contribute to class activities
- Increased sense of responsibility for group learning
- greater sense of support and camaraderie when others were contributing to class discussions and creating group resources
- creating own learning resources (blogs, class essay plans, group glossary ...) increased sense of ownership

Based on the research conducted the technology is most suitable when it is used in conjunction with each other - the technology has been used together i.e. smart board and internet, therefore it is more appropriate to ask which combinations were most successful, which combination led to the greatest opportunity for motivation to be developed. In fact it may be more appropriate to discuss the repeated use of technologies as part of a system of learning strategies where confidence, responsibility, support, ownership are developed on the way to increased levels of motivation.

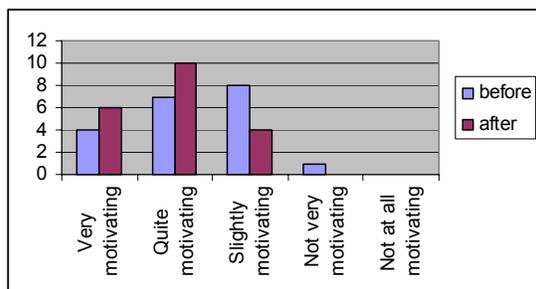
Using technology

the most important factors when selecting technologies to be used in lessons:

- To choose to make use of technology which is fit for purpose - the document viewer is only really useful if you are wanting students to demonstrate something small to a large group.
- Consider whether students will already be familiar with the technology - smart boards are in most teaching spaces in college - the students already know how they work but blogging was unfamiliar therefore tutorials were needed before they could be used constructively

The questionnaire - key results

'how motivating do you find the variety of teaching methods used in media?'
average response went from 'slightly motivating' to 'quite motivating'



'how often do you contribute in lessons?' average response went from 'I contribute sometimes' to 'I contribute quite often'

'which technology/combination of technologies do you think is most motivating?'
average response – wireless keyboard and mouse + smart board

'When you contribute in class how does this make you feel? Motivated' - average response went from 'a little' to 'quite'

DISCUSSION

What factors influenced success of this project?

Student perceptions:

Students were interested in the subject – they use technology all the time (mobile phones, internet etc) and are increasingly open to using technology in the classroom. They also enjoy discussing technology and how it impacts on our society and this was brought into focus by using technology to learn about this subject.

Students also enjoy practical hands-on tasks and this is something they expect from the course. They also appreciated that these strategies were different from those used in other modules.

Technology:

The level of preparation required for a technology heavy lesson can be considerable – for example the ‘monopoly’ style game required the production of the virtual board and counters as well as the cards for each property, the play money as well as all the questions for the assessment part of the process. The technology can also have a tendency to go wrong or can lack the flexibility required for larger groups – for example the blog home site crashing or the wireless keyboard and mouse not having the required connectivity range. It may also be perceived as gimmicky or unnecessary (document viewer) or too far out of their technophobic comfort zone (making their own blog website).

Variety and access:

The variety of technologies used during the course of the project and the access to the technologies the students could use will be different in other institutions. I think the students consider themselves very lucky to have the dedicated use of their own IT suite as well as two full time technicians who can help them with their work.

Course content:

The AS OCR media studies course includes the option to study the relationship between the consumers and producers of new media technologies thereby providing an obvious link to using new technology to teach the module. For example - the students appreciated that they were creating a blog site to house all their research about blog sites.

Principal findings

- The project reinforced existing evidence about the use of ICLT in so far as technology can benefit students by expanding their skills and confidence
- That the use of ICLT in class based tasks can be varied and can support content delivery
- A wider variety of activities which make use of other ICLT resources was welcomed by the students and even those who considered the technical side of the subject matter daunting were willing to use new technology in the activities undertaken.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this investigation I am now far more aware of the need to build the students confidence as well as their motivation - by having confidence that what you are doing is correct you are more likely to be motivating them to continue what you have already started. I am therefore going to try to ensure confidence and comfort and an awareness of what is required before expecting motivation. I am also aware that the students come to the class with a range of anxieties, skills, preferences, issues, and that the motivation of the students should be dependent on where they are now. We need to make use of only the most appropriate technology and that students will be de-motivated by technology which appears redundant or unnecessary and consequently to introduce any technology which they are unfamiliar with in a manner which provides an opportunity for experimentation and confidence building without the pressure to demonstrate skill. And it is worth considering the impact on the teacher as well as on the students. By providing a range of activities and technologies to work with in the classroom the variety of teaching strategies may increase and enthusiasm with it.

Potential extensions/developments

- The use of computer games as learning tools - students are often already familiar with game formats and the focus on winning or completion of a game could be constructive due to the element of progress and memory required but the level must be perfectly pitched to allow students to make use of highly advanced game play skills whilst also providing an opportunity to learn specific requirements of any scheme of work.

- Blended learning (using face to face as well as on-line teaching resources) this could be in the form of increased use of on-line demonstrations and tutorials for how to use the technology as well as supporting the delivery of subject content
- Increased development of subject specific resources designed to be accessed and assessed on-line

Issues

This research should be considered specific to age group, access to technology, technical support as well as subject. It should also be noted that due to the continuous developments in ICLT that this research should also be viewed as specific to the time period in which it was undertaken.

References and further reading

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