

Tweet the Teacher: Using Twitter as a Mechanism to Increase Classroom Engagement

Michael A. Cowling¹, Jeremy P. Novak²

1 Central Queensland University, International Education Research Centre, 60 Marine Parade Southport QLD 4215, m.cowling@cqu.edu.au

2 Southern Cross University, Southern Cross Business School, Locked Mail Bag 4, Coolangatta QLD 4225, jeremy.novak@scu.edu.au

Over the last 10 years, the term “digital native” has been coined to describe those who have never known a world where technology was not a part of people’s everyday lives. These digital natives see the world differently than the previous digital immigrants and are involved daily with the use of social networking tools and technological mobile devices that keep them constantly connected to a global communications network.

This paper reports on research conducted by Cowling and Novak into the use of the Twitter social networking tool as a mechanism to engage students in the classroom. Through the use of technology, students were able to tweet the lecturer during their class from their own device and have their queries appear on the lecture slides. After a successful implementation trial across four international campuses of CQUniversity in 2011, which was reported on at ISANA 2011 (Novak & Cowling, 2011), this model was rolled out to a course running on eight campuses of CQUniversity at the beginning of 2012 that had both international and domestic students.

Preliminary data analysis from a stratified survey of students and staff reflected similar implementation issues as the 2011 implementation relating to staff buy-in, but also provided significant further insight into the issues occurring, with many students indicating on the survey that the lecturer did not encourage the use of technology in the classroom. This led the authors to surmise that their previous thesis regarding technology competency was inadequate and in fact the problem was instead one of technology culture, with digital immigrant academics hesitant to change their teaching methods in the face of new technology. Lessons learnt from the data analysis are presented along with strategies to encourage these digital immigrant staff to engage with the technology that will benefit their digital native students.

References

- Novak, J., Cowling, M. A., 2011. The Implementation of Social Networking as a Tool for Improving Student Participation in the Classroom, Proceedings of ISANA International Education Association 22nd Annual Conference, Hobart, TAS, 29th November – 2nd December, 2011.
- Smith, S. D. & Caruso, J. B. (2010) The ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology. Bolder ECAR and University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Key Words

Twitter, social networking, student participation, engagement, active learning, effective feedback, student progression, iphone, ipad.