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Developing and facilitating a creative teaching culture using an Electronic Voting System

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Background
At the beginning of the 2008/2009 academic year and led by the e-Learning team, the University of Bath embarked on a pilot of an Electronic Voting System (EVS).

With the intention of improving the assessment and feedback loop, the EVS has been embraced by a number of lecturers to support their face-to-face teaching. During the pilot year, there has been evidence of a sustained change in the way that some individuals teach when they use the technology.

Case Studies
A survey of Computer Science students who used the EVS during a problems class indicated a positive impact. When surveyed, 66% of a group of 45 students said that the use of the EVS "revolutionises (their) problem classes". When asked to explain this view, one student replied that, "When getting questions wrong it meant that I'll now remember the correct answers because of the way it is presented". Another commented that "(it) gives you feedback (on) your knowledge and how you are doing in terms of the rest of the class." [full article, http://go.bath.ac.uk/p5cb]

Developing the teaching culture
The challenge for the e-Learning team has been to establish support structures which encourage staff to develop their teaching practice, allowing them to gain the benefits of such learning technologies. The e-Learning team has redesigned their own staff support model. The justification for this is evident when applying the Collis, Peters and Pals (2001) 4-E's Model. This model implies that for a technology to be implemented in a sustainable manner, the combined factors (Educational effectiveness, Ease of use and Personal engagement) need to be larger than the threshold point, which are determined by Environmental factors. To ensure that this happens, we have re-visited our e-Learning staff development model.

Case Studies
A lecturer in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, who used the EVS for a mid-unit formative assessment said, “[A particular] type of question was very useful as it drew upon a lot of different aspects of the course. Students needed to identify the differences between piston (propeller) powered aircraft, and jet powered aircraft with respect to their range capabilities”. Teaching staff can really begin to engage students in their learning at a deeper level, through using formative assessment approaches such as these. [full article, http://go.bath.ac.uk/ncy8]

A blog-style website has become a central resource over the course of the pilot for:
- For promoting peer interaction and support
- For monitoring understanding of the content by students
- For enabling the provision of immediate feedback
- For keeping students actively engaged in their learning
- For diagnostic testing at the beginning of a lecture

The full paper exploring these ideas can be found at http://opus.bath.ac.uk/12505

How can EVS be used to support learning?
Davenport, Hayes and Parmar (2009) identified five key areas:
- For diagnostic testing at the beginning of a lecture
- For monitoring understanding of the content by students
- For enabling the provision of immediate feedback
- For keeping students actively engaged in their learning
- For promoting peer interaction and support

The full paper exploring these ideas can be found at http://opus.bath.ac.uk/12505

How have outcomes been disseminated?
A blog-style website has become a central resource over the course of the pilot for:
- Dissemination of good practice in the form of practitioner experiences
- Reflections on meetings with internal and external colleagues
- Support material, provided in the form of written and video user guides
- Links to relevant external websites via an RSS feed from delicious

The EVS is also used within the e-Learning Staff Development Programme to promote personalisation within seminars and workshops.

Where next for you?
Now, it is across to you! We are very interested in hearing your stories of strategies that your institution has put in place to promote a cultural change in teaching practice. In your opinion, what works? What does not work? Are there any examples to evidence these thoughts? To continue this discussion, please visit http://go.bath.ac.uk/ir0l

Contact details
Nitin would be delighted to hear from colleagues who have any questions about the Electronic Voting System project at the University of Bath, and how the technology might be used to support learning and teaching within your context. Please contact him on 01225 384 392 or at N.RParmar@bath.ac.uk

Find out more about the Electronic Voting System project, http://go.bath.ac.uk/evs ● Download this poster, http://opus.bath.ac.uk/14252