Models for the Successful Integration of Social Networking into the Studies of Digital Native Students

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Fourteen years ago, Marc Prensky famously coined the term "digital native" to refer to individuals that grew up with technology and didn't know a world where it was not a part of peoples lives (Prensky 2001a; 2001b). Presnky theorised that, due to their birth into the digital age, these individuals possessed characteristics that made them distinct learners - preferencing speed, non-linear processing and social learning. Since then, other researchers have built on Prensky's work and applied it to students, suggesting that they need rich environments (Jones et al 2009) that use multiple types of different technology (Thompson 2012) in order to be effective learners.

However, despite this, work presented by the author at ISANA 2012 (Cowling & Novak, 2012) suggested that students do not always automatically accept technology in the classroom. In fact, the research showed that students were hesitant to use technology in a learning and teaching setting, and that staff were hesitant to promote its use to students. This is supported by anecdotal evidence from students that indicate that while some are comfortable with technology, it needs to be integrated into their studies in a natural way so as to be accepted.

Based on this, this paper will look at the literature on learning and teaching and how technology can be tied to both pedagogy as well as the broader cohort experience, especially as it relates to International students and their study at Australian universities. Adaptions to existing models will be proposed, with a view to encouraging the successful integration of technology and social networking into the classroom.

Through this work, a greater understanding of social networking in education will be obtained, for the benefit of not only teachers, but also other university staff that work with these new "digital native" students.

References

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Key Words

Social networking, student participation, engagement, active learning, effective feedback, student progression.