

trialling the use of collaborative technology workshops to engage at-risk youth and teachers in VET



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A 2009 collaborative workshop partnership between:

A 2009 collaborative workshop partnership between:

- Victoria University (School of Creative Industries)
- Adult Multicultural Education Services (Resourcing, Learning and Innovation unit)

It aimed to:

- deliver new digital media skills to at-risk young people and their teachers
- discover new ways of engaging and retaining at-risk young people

And taking part were:

- 16-24 year olds studying in Victoria's Adult and Community Education (ACE) sector
- their teachers
- Sourced from six ACE providers in outer Melbourne and regional areas
- Studying or teaching VCAL, literacy and vocational programs
- Workshops taught by VU multimedia and professional writing teachers

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- trial new ways of engaging 'at-risk' young people
- provide new form of professional development to ACE teachers
- pilot collaborative cross-generational approaches to learning
- bridge the digital technology 'generation gap'



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- series of four all-day workshops:
 - two for teachers only
 - two for teachers and students
- delivered from March to May 2009
- supported by a Ning website moderated by a paid AMES teacher.
- series delivered twice (concurrently)



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- Workshop 1: story development principles (teachers only)
- Workshop 2: intro to low-cost/free media software (teachers only)
- Workshops 3 & 4: development of comics/films (teachers & students)

[illegible]

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- digital video and photography basics
- shooting and editing video using Flip cameras and Windows Moviemaker, exporting stills and footage
- creating comic strips with Comic Life software
- basic image processing (Photoshop, Fireworks)
- introduction to virtual worlds (Second Life)



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SETTING

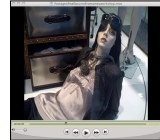
- VU premises in central Melbourne.
- location chosen for its centrality, proximity to train and tram transport
- also to introduce tertiary education environments to young people unfamiliar with TAFE or university
- Tools used (paid):
 - a hired 'portable lab' of 20 laptop PCs
 - five Flip video cameras
 - Wireless Internet
 - Photoshop
 - Illustrator
- Tools used (free/low cost)
 - Windows Moviemaker
 - Comic Life comic creation software
 - Firefox web browser
 - Second Life



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RESEARCH: BACKGROUND

- Definitions of 'engagement' in education - duality of formal and informal activities (Kuh, 2001; McGaw et al, 1993; Lee et al, 1993, etc)
- Informal learning growing and happening increasingly outside classroom walls (Jenkins 2006)
- Networked technology; young people lead adoption (White, 2007) and are at the vanguard of social change (Surveying the Digital Future 2008 & 2009; Lenhart et al. 2008)
- Internet now fundamental life management tool for young people (Grey Global Group 2007)
- Large gap between young people's use of technology and their teachers/case workers/mentors (Blanchard et al, 2005)



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RESEARCH: SOME MODELS

Overall: Constructionism (Papert, 1991)

- 'learning as a reconstruction rather than as a transmission of knowledge'
- 'constructing a meaningful product'

Three specific models:

- Engagement Theory (Kearsley and Shneiderman 1999)
- Produsage (Bruns 2005)
- Participatory Cultures (Jenkins 2006)

Common themes:

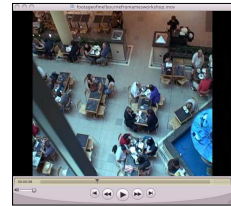
- Embrace conversational nature of the web
 - Object-centred sociality (Knorr-Cetina 1997)
- Embrace participatory cultures (Jenkins 2006)
 - Producers-consumers (producers: Bruns 2005)
 - Collective intelligence (Levy 2000)
- Need for teaching context and consequence (Jenkins 2006)



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RESEARCH: DATA COLLECTION

- pre-and-post workshop surveys based on the 2008 E-learning Benchmarking survey for Teachers (Australian Flexible Learning Framework)
- focus groups (teachers and students)
- facilitator observations (weblog site)
- online forum for teacher participants (Ning)



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RESEARCH: FINDINGS SUMMARY

Engagement:

- Students generally engaged, particularly those whose interests were tapped
- Evidence that the most disengaged students responded particularly well
- Students disengaged when already knew technology, or when it broke down (MS Moviemaker)
- Teachers most engaged were those motivated already. Preaching to converted?
- Evidence of follow up by both students and teachers: hip hop video, comedian documentary, integration of storytelling into classes
- Storytelling workshop useful for teachers: set them up for future work with students (but could have been more integrated with technology workshops)
- Need for some teachers for basic computer tuition (thought they knew more than they did). Separate workshops recommended
- Teacher/student collaboration viewed as successful by all participants**
- Teacher/teacher collaboration patchy

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RESEARCH: FINDINGS SUMMARY

Success factors:

- Workshop pace and structure worked for most participants
- Smaller groups better (6-8)
- Facilitator is crucial to success: needs to earn respect through technical know-how
- Comic and video creation activities very popular with students and teachers:
- Flip cameras particularly noted as useful and fun by all (simplicity)
- Use of free/cheap software problematic at times (Moviemaker) and problem-free at others (Comic Life). False economy? The right tools matter.
- Location key success factor : new surroundings/contexts are source of inspiration
- Resourcing (ACE sector very under-resourced, particularly teacher PD time)

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