Calderdale College: The Flip Video Challenge

Summary

Calderdale College used simple video recording technology to avoid issues during teacher observation where tutors ‘perform’ for the observer. It was found that recording the learners provided more useful evidence of the impact of teaching, and also made tutors think less about their own assessment and more about the learner experience.

Technology training sessions using de-contextualisation reduced pressure while tutors learned new skills. The result was that teachers made their own connections about how they could use video and mobile technology to enhance their own lessons and the college has moved to a grade 2 in the use of technology.

About Calderdale College

Calderdale College is the largest provider of further education (post-16) courses and work-based learning (Apprenticeships) and the sole provider of higher education awards in Calderdale, a Metropolitan Borough in West Yorkshire. They engage with over 5,000 learners at their main site in Halifax as well as several additional locations that mainly deliver curriculum specific courses.

The challenge

Observations of teaching and learning at Calderdale College had revealed that many teachers were putting barriers in front of using educational technology. Debs Philip, Centre Manager, Teacher Education, University of Huddersfield Education said: “individuals were not thinking about mobile technology that could be used to enhance learning.”
Debs had identified limitations when attempting to complete compulsory observations of trainee tutors who teach at a distance from the college and/or in difficult or dangerous environments. A lack of available technology impacted on both of these issues.

**The activity**

Debs thought a possible solution to issues with observations during trainees’ teacher training courses was to record a lesson and review it with the trainee. However, the lack of technology initially available led to the use of her own Flip camera to test her theories in the pilot. She loaned her camera to a trainee sports tutor on the Certificate in Education, who could not be observed easily because he regularly taught a long distance from the college. He recorded his teaching and the resulting video was reviewed with Debs when he was back at the college.

Despite the added reflection being very positive, Debs saw the limitation of a teacher ‘performing’ when facing the camera, so she turned it round to face the learners for further recordings.

The next stage was to create a training opportunity to share the positive findings of the initial trial in a fun way that would help individuals think more widely about using mobile technology in their own curriculum areas. A training session was created, following Piaget’s theory of assimilation and accommodation that de-contextualised the technology. This allowed the trainees to learn how to use the tools and then think about how they could apply that learning and new skills to their own teaching and learning scenarios.

As Debs Philip explained; “This led to it becoming a natural part of what they do”, enabling them to “stop thinking it is about themselves as teachers and move to understanding that it is about enhancing the learners’ experiences.”

The training was a development of the Professor Stephen Hepple Challenge (which gets individuals to use a small collection of still images to tell a story without words) with small teams putting together a story from three short video clips. They were provided with props and accessories to ‘dress up’ for the filming and a laptop to do basic editing to combine the clips into a single piece.

There were a few rules to ensure that everyone gained new skills and understanding, though overall the process was fairly informal. In some instances the learning was extended, as the participants were able to take the technology away with them and try it in a real situation.

To continue the fun element, the college also organised ‘viewing’ events where group video clips were show in a cinema-style environment with popcorn. This added to the atmosphere and built strong ‘learning’
connections, as well as providing another idea of how the use of video could be incorporated into lessons.

**The outcomes**

Debs highlighted that there were “lots of pockets of change in practice, with a move away from the traditional e-learning idea of simply using a presentation with the lesson objectives on.”

The take up of this training opportunity has been high, with all PGCE/Cert Ed students participating as well as a significant number of established teachers.

Following the success of the training, a small number of Flip cameras and mini laptops were bought by the University of Huddersfield, with further resources being purchased by the college, all of which are loaned to staff via the Skills Zone (formally the Learning Resources Centre).

**The impact**

A key impact has been an improvement in the use of technology, picked up in inspection moving from a grade 3 to 2. Debs Philip has spoken about this project at three national conferences.

The impact of reflecting through reviewing a recording with a mentor is not as easy to replicate with directly observed sessions. It was clear that when the teacher knew the camera was ‘on them’ they were ‘performing’ more so it was not as apparent how much effective learning was taking place nor how much impact the tutors’ delivery had on the class.

By focusing the camera on the learners, it is easier to see the impact the teacher is having and reduce the chances of the teacher performing to or being scared by the camera. It also creates an opportunity for the review and reflection to have more objectivity.

After attending this training, teachers produced a list of possible ways they could implement the use of mobile technology into their courses, showing how gaining the new skill will impact in lots of different ways on the teaching and learning process:

- Record tutorials to provide more active feedback;
- Observation and evidence-capture, especially of practical subjects where it isn’t always appropriate for the observing tutor to be present. E.g. sports lesson, construction workshops;
- Teaching techniques – unobtrusive micro teaching;

Image 1: Flip camera
- Allow students to reflect and self-assess their teaching/presenting style and increase confidence;
- Help create evidence for assessment;
- Recording of family learning sessions to show interaction between adult/child could be used to show progress and be used as evidence for RARPA;
- Student “Dear Diary” reflective journals;
- Childcare: Play activities in order to help students understand/reflect a theory;
- Bringing outside events into the classroom – festivals, poetry;
- Interview practice;
- Demonstration to run alongside activity or create a resource to access at a later date to support learning;
- Students role play a concept to enable rapid playback;
- Incorporate clips on PowerPoint presentations;
- Creating simple scenarios as foci for discussion in class by students;
- Accessibility: Dyslexic user to record lecture rather than writing notes.

**The lessons learned**

One of the most important success factors on this project is the fact that the College Principal is on board with the project, regularly attending staff development sessions, which contributes to the college’s culture of learning.

The key stages of the training, to enable replication, are:

- Allow individuals / groups to play with technology, without direct reference to teaching and learning, to reduce pressure;
- Encourage individuals to make connections and identify links to transfer ‘life’ skills to the classroom;
- Payback – expect a detailed reflection / action plan to follow through to the classroom.

The first set of resources was bought by the University of Huddersfield (as the college is part of the Post Compulsory Education and Training Consortium). Additional technology was then purchased by the college using a departmental budget. Training was delivered centrally showing that it is able
to transfer across all curriculum areas and is sustainable – college funds permitting.

**Useful links**

Calderdale College  
University of Huddersfield Consortium for Post Compulsory Education and Training  
Debs Philip’s introduction to using the Flip Camera  
Flip Video Support, United Kingdom

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