

# Technical and academic partnership: building audio and video into a virtual learning resource.

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## "Clydetown" – an inter-professional approach to e-learning.



"Clydetown" is a web-based learning package developed by the School of Health and Social Care that builds on the "project developed collaboratively by the Social Work divisions across the 4 West of Scotland Universities.

## "A learning curriculum is essentially situated" – Lave & Wenger (1991) p 97



Lave J & Wenger E (1991) Situated Learning: Legitimate peripheral participation, Cambridge University Press.

This audio facility adds depth to the student experience and assists in the process of constructing understanding of the professional social work role. The pedagogical approach adopted by this project is essentially constructivist i.e. it is predicated on assumptions about the capacity of the individual learner to utilise the available media to help shape and construct his/her own understanding. (Fosnot 1996).

Within applied disciplines like social work, that construction is also informed by professional values and skills and helps students become inducted into the professional role – a form of professional apprenticeship (Lave & Wenger 1991)

Fosnot, Catherine. (1996) Constructivism: Theory, perspectives, & practice. New York: Teachers College Press.

This project, which is built around a fictitious town, has been extensively updated and developed to meet the learning needs of students from all 5 disciplines within the School. A steering group, involving representatives from each of the divisions together with colleagues from the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Community Health worked to develop the revised brief through consultation with staff across the School.

The idea is that the materials available, while generic in content, can be applied contextually by each staff group to best meet the needs of their students. The site is currently in use with social work students at various levels. This has been an interesting and exciting project to develop as it is a conscious move away from a content-driven use of technology to one where the potential to enhance student learning through the appropriate use of technology is fundamental to the process.

Having selected to explore the Grimesbar area of the town, the student is free to browse the content and select whatever they wish to examine in detail. All of the content within Clydetown had been provided to assist students to develop the wider context of their learning and to construct their own understanding of the issues they explore.

This means that all of the content is reusable by a wide range of students and teachers as they create their own contextual meaning within their particular academic discipline. Depending on the module teaching that is informing their investigations, students may be encouraged to examine particular locations (e.g. the O'Donnell family) or they may be free to discover relevant content independently.

Some of the audio clips included within "Clydetown" allow students to listen to the discussions, dilemmas and debates of established social work practitioners as they grapple with the daily complexities of their professional role.

The use of audio and video materials within a blended learning context allows students to build their own understanding and to learn from the learning of others (Lee et al 1999). Through the discussion forum, students are encouraged to explore collectively their understanding of the module content through the context of the case studies and supporting audio/ video.

Lee J, McEndree J, Dineen F and Mayes T., "learning vicariously in a distributed environment", Active Learning 10 (July), pp 4-9.

In all stages of the Clydetown re-design process, the three disparate groups i.e. the academics, the Learning Technologist and the external Web Design team were able to synchronise these experiences and recommend successful approaches to the Clydetown rebuild.



Within many of the locations, students are able to access audio or video clips selected to augment the content in those locations. Having perhaps explored a theoretical concept either in the classroom, through online discussion or through independent study, the student is able to test out and perhaps validate that learning through the "authentic voices" of real people.

For example, within the Smith case study, students can access not only information about this man's fictitious life experiences but can also select (within the Social Work Services location in Grimesbar) to listen to some audio from the BBC sound archive about the real life experiences of Mr Spraggins - a man grappling in real life with similar issues.

This has proven to be a constructive means of consolidating and expanding students' understanding across a number of aspects of the curriculum. They have an opportunity to:

- Consolidate their understanding of concepts taught within the module
- Develop their skills in building an argument
- Consolidate their academic writing skills through the production of short analytical reports
- Develop their listening and communication skills
- Develop their skills in collaborative work