THE USE OF BLOGS AS REFLECTIVE LEARNING TOOLS FOR PLACEMENT STUDENTS

Katharina Wolf[1]
School of Marketing, Curtin Business School
Curtin University of Technology

2009026

MARKETING INSIGHTS
Working Paper Series
School of Marketing

[1]Corresponding author:

Katharina Wolf
School of Marketing, Curtin Business School
Curtin University of Technology
GPO BOX U1987
Perth, WA 6845
Australia
Tel (+61 8) 9266 2851
Fax (+61 8) 9266 3937
Email: k.wolf@curtin.edu.au

THE USE OF BLOGS AS REFLECTIVE LEARNING TOOLS FOR PLACEMENT STUDENTS

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the effectiveness of web logs (blogs), or online journals, within the context of a compulsory, final year placement unit for public relations students. The key goal behind the use of Web2.0 technology was to encourage ongoing, reflective practice via an exchange between students; thereby limiting feelings of isolation, commonly reported during the course of this individual tuition unit (ITU). Secondary objectives were to encourage exchange between participating students based at different, on- and offshore campuses, therefore integrating an international perspective and insight into best industry practice. Online journals have their shortcomings, particularly from an administrative point of view. However, the results indicate that the introduction of the Reflective Blog can be described as a success, particularly in the context of an individual tuition unit, by effectively shifting the focus away from textbook- and teacher-centric education, to interactive, peer to peer learning opportunities.

Keywords: internationalisation, e-learning, peer to peer learning, reflective writing, social media, Web 2.0

INTRODUCTION

The Professional Placement Unit is a compulsory requirement for all public relations students at Curtin University of Technology and a crucial element of the accreditation of the PR Major by the Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA). This requirement includes students at four offshore locations, in Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur and Miri), Singapore and Mauritius. The final year unit is positioned as a *stepping stone* for a successful career in the industry and an opportunity to put into practice what has been learned during pervious years of study. The majority of students retrospectively refers to the unit as (one of) the best unit(s) of their degree (Curtin University of Technology, 2007). However, due to its format as semester long *individual tuition unit*, a number of students have commented on feelings of isolation and loneliness, due to the lack of interaction with their peers. Additionally, despite the overall popularity of the unit, response rates to the university wide eVALUate end of

semester questionnaire have been comparatively low, both at a School and Faculty level. This may be explained by the fact that the majority of students commence their placement before the start of the actual semester and have, by the time the evaluation is due, already distanced themselves from their studies. At this point their focus is on their future professional careers, in particular on finding employment. Additionally, despite the high overall satisfaction rate, the placement unit has traditionally scored lower than the University and Faculty wide average on a number of prescribed eVALUate items, such as *learning resources, quality of teaching* and the quality of ongoing *feedback* received. eVALUate focuses solely on levels of agreement and does not take *unsure/not applicable* responses into account. After taking over as Unit Coordinator for the placement unit, I consequently faced two challenges: On one hand I wanted to improve student learning, encourage reflective practice and instil an understanding of the need for continuous professional development (CPD) if students were to succeed in the field of public relations. On the other hand, eVALUate is a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for me as an academic and educator. As much as I personally do not agree with the 'once size fits all' approach to unit evaluation, I saw the need to address particularly the end of semester feedback response rate, as well as the lower scoring items.

The importance of reflection as part of the learning process has been widely recognised (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Brown, Bull, & Pendlebury, 1997; Moon, 1999; Morrison, 1996), however, primarily within a teacher education context (Bain, Ballantyne, Packer, & Mills, 1999; Bain, Mills, Ballantyne, & Packer, 2002; Borko, Michalec, Timmons, & Siddle, 1997; Calderhead, 2006; Hume, 2009; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Loughran, 2002; Shireen Desouza & Czerniak, 2003). More than two decades ago Boud et al. (1985) described reflection as "an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it" (p. 19). They further argued that it is this engagement with experience that is an essential part of the learning process. However, reflective practice has been largely ignored in public relations education, particularly in the context of the Professional Placement Unit at Curtin University. In the past, students included some refection on their time at university and their industry placement in the end of semester report. However, like many assignments, these reports were often completed under time pressure enforced by the impending deadline and did not encourage ongoing reflection. Some students had kept diaries, but these tended to be descriptive and lacked depth of thought.

Previous attempts to invite students to an end of semester "de brief and reflection forum" had also failed, due to conflicting work and study commitments. Additionally, enrolment numbers between 70 to 100 students in the same location make individual presentations in front of peers impossible. As Unit Coordinator I had to devise a different approach. Consequently, with a strong focus on satisfaction rates and improved student experience, a Reflective Blog was introduced as assessable component for an initial trial period during semester 1 2008.

An introduction to blogs

Alongside wikis and RSS technologies, blogs are referred to as the most familiar Web2.0 applications in the business community (Martin, 2007). Blogging is a contraction of the term *web logging* and can be best described as a form of micropublishing (Roberts, 2003; Williams & Jacobs, 2004). A blog, according to the Oxford English dictionary is "a frequently updated web site consisting of personal observations, excerpts from other sources, etc., typically run by a single person, and usually with hyperlinks to other sites; an online journal or diary"(Oxford University Press, 2008). Blogs first emerged in the 1990s, out of online forums, personal web pages and email lists (Alexander, 2006). However, over the past decade blogs have evolved from simple online diaries to communication tools with the capacity to engage people in collaborative activity, knowledge sharing, reflection and debate (Roberts, 2003; Williams & Jacobs, 2004). Featuring no or very limited start up costs, few basic infrastructure requirements and ease of use, blogs enable users to publish their thoughts to a global audience, beyond traditional boundaries and without delays (Williams & Jacobs, 2004). Blogs have the potential to provide everyone with a voice (Technorati, 2008), effectively reviving the notion of Habermas' *public sphere* (Habermas, 1989), by fostering citizen journalism.

Blogs can provide the opportunity to combine text, images as well as links to other blogs, websites and other media related to its topic. Although not always enabled, the ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is a crucial component of many blogs (Schroeder, 2005). Some blogs, such as Boing Boing ("boingboing,") and the Huffington Post (Huffington), have attracted large and dedicated readerships in the thousands. However, the majority of blogs are personal reflections, ongoing diaries or commentaries by individuals aimed for a small

audience (Nardi, et al., 2004). There are also corporate blogs, which continue to gain popularity and attention from a public relations and communication perspective (Lee, 2006; Weidlich, 2003), and video blogs, also called *vlogs*. Over the past years blogging has become more *mainstream*, with news services and even politicians using them as a tool to form public opinion. We only have to look as far as the last American election to recognise how powerful bloggers have become. Today, blogs cover nearly every imaginable genre from travel, politics and fashion, to education, music and cooking. Relatively recently we have also seen the emergence of *fake blogs,* where companies create fictional blogs as a marketing tool with serious repercussions if found out (Boynton, 2007). As of December 2007, the blog search engine Technorati was tracking 112.8 million blogs (Technorati, 2008)[i]. Overall, user generated content has grown so much in popularity that Time magazine named *You* as person of the year 2006 (Grossman, 2006).

Blogs as teaching and learning tools

With focus on ICT as an answer to globally changing work environments, pressure has been put on education institutions to embrace flexible modes of delivery' (Beattie & James, 1997), open-learning (Lockwood & Gooley, 2001), life long learning (Field, 2006), virtual classrooms (Reid, 2001) and institutions without walls. This paper explores the potential of blogs as reflective e-learning spaces for students in higher education, particularly in the context of internship and individual tuition units, in which students can frequently feel isolated or disconnected. Despite the fact that blogs have been around for roughly half the history of the World Wide Web, they have only relatively recently been integrated into the teaching and learning mix (Gray, 2007; Williams & Jacobs, 2004). Furthermore, research into the effectiveness of blogs as learning tools is mainly clustered around its use as part of teacher training (Dickey, 2004; Divitini, Haugalokken, & Morken, 2005; Hernández-Ramos, 2004), and other disciplines where daily journals have traditionally formed a crucial part of the learning experience. From this perspective, blogs may be referred to as a new *genre* of learning journals (Williams & Jacobs, 2004). Blogs have the potential to "be a truly transformational technology in that they provide students with a high level of autonomy while simultaneously providing opportunity for greater interaction with peers" (Williams & Jacobs, 2004, p. 244). As such, they provide a nearly limitless

amount of teaching and learning opportunities, but particularly lend themselves as a tool to promote reflective practice (Hernández-Ramos, 2004; Roberts, 2003).

The new media challenge

The current generation of students is highly familiar with online communication technologies such as ICQ, MSN Messenger or Skype; they competently surf the web for information and heavily rely on email and social networking tools. Within a marketing and communications context, social media examples have been increasingly integrated as teaching resources, thereby acknowledging that future graduates may be required to provide advice on blogging strategies, or may even have to write a blog on behalf of their organisation (Kent, 2008). However, the *traditional* curriculum has largely neglected the need for students to develop a high level of *information literacy,* commonly referred to as the ability to access, evaluate, organise and use information gathered from a wide variety of different sources (Humes, 1999; Plotnick, 1999). With the increased use of online technologies comes a greater need for students to develop critical thinking, analytical and cognitive skills in order to perform and solve problems in digital environments (Duffy & Bruns, 2006). Additionally, students have to keep in mind that "In the blogosphere, everything you say is *on the record*. Once a story is on a blog, keeping a lid on it is impossible," explains Neville Hobson, an independent consultant on blogging and podcasting, quoted in the Shift Communications Report (2007). Students need to be aware that their current supervisor, placement organisation or even future employers will pay close attention to what they have been posting online (CollegeGrad.com, 2006; onrec.com, 2007). However, Jonassen (2000) argues that writing a diary in a public space, rather than solely for their own benefit or their instructor's eyes, usually motivates students to put more effort into the process, since the audience is perceived as more *authentic*. This consequently may provide new opportunities; in fact, Trunk (2006) argues blogging is good for your career, as it provides people with an opportunity to establish themselves as an *expert* in their field. There have reportedly been a number of public relations students, particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States, that have been *snapped up* by companies as the result of the reflective (voluntary) blog they were writing whilst still at university (Bailey, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

The Internet offers hundreds of free blog hosts, however, the blog for this particular trial project was created on Blogger.com, arguably one of the best known blog hosting services (Downes, 2004), which has been around since 1999. The blog was used as vehicle for student reflection in semester one 2008 of the Professional Practice Unit, as part of the PR Major at Curtin University of Technology, as well as at initially two of our four offshore locations. Over the course of this study, 68 students were invited as authors, creating a total of 328 posts. Students were provided with a four page long *Blogging Guide* and required to post a minimum of four original posts and four responses over the duration of their (minimum) 20 working day long placement. Due to flexible placement arrangements, students were blogging over different periods of time and at varying intensity, however, for the purpose of this project contributions were monitored between February and May 2008. Traditionally, students in this unit have been encouraged to keep a daily journal, which is a well known strategy to help them engage in *metacognition* (Hernández-Ramos, 2004). However, although these journals may have helped with the writing of the final report, they were a non-assessable component. In contrast to this, the Reflective Blog was created as a fully integrated and compulsory assessment.

A blog is essentially an online diary, which reflects the personality of the author (Dickey, 2004; Downes, 2004; Nardi et al., 2004). However, instead of asking individual students to create their own blog, which appears to be a relatively common approach in teaching and learning initiatives that embrace blogging (Hernández-Ramos, 2004), a single Reflective *Group* Blog was created as a *one stop shop* for PR placement reflection, with the aim to make monitoring and student contribution as straight forward as possible. However, despite the blog design being predetermined, students nevertheless had the opportunity to develop their own (writing) style. Containing only two fields (title and entry), students were able to update their posts without having to worry about page formats or HMT syntax (Downes, 2004), with the option for more adventurous students to include images, photos, logos and links to work samples. Originally, the decision was made to restrict access to commenting tools to enrolled students, however, the blog itself was made publicly available, in order to give students a taste of writing for a *global* audience. The fundamental idea of blogs is to act as an open, uncensored forum, providing everyone with an equal opportunity to express their thoughts (Downes, 2004). However, as the Reflective

Blog was used as a globally accessibly learning tool, I felt the need to monitor students contribution, particularly in order to ensure placement organisations' confidentiality was respected and students were discussing problems in a professional manner. Over the course of this study only a couple of students had to be asked to review their posts – with a particular focus on grammar and spelling. The Blogger technology allowed for all posts and comments to be automatically forwarded to the Unit Coordinator.

In an attempt to remain with the new media theme, data analysed for this paper came from a 14-questions strong online survey, created via Surveymonkey.com, in which all enrolled students were invited to participate. Anonymity was fully guaranteed and perceived as absolutely crucial in order to invite critical reflection on the blogging experience. Additionally, comments in student emails to the Unit Coordinator and on the blog were taken into account. 76% (n=50) of eligible semester one students responded to the survey.

FINDINGS

Despite a slow start, students joined the blog without major difficulties. Only a handful of students allowed their original author invites to expire and one misread the instructions and created her own individual blog. By the end of the semester the entire group, representing students from three different campuses (Australia, Singapore and Mauritius) were fully involved, with up to 21 posts a day.

The Reflective Blog as learning tool

The vast majority of posts were self-reflective ("*I think that…*") and when replying to postings, most students addressed their peers personally ("*thanks for the tips, Lisa*"). 90% of survey respondents stated that they had read a blog before, but only 54% had responded to a blog previously and merely 16% (8) had their own personal blog. Based on the IP address provided in the Surveymonkey data it emerged that seven of these students were based at offshore campuses. Considering that average respondent's age was below 23, this indicates that current undergraduate students might be less familiar with web2.0 technology than widely assumed.

Table 1. Student perception of the effectiveness of the Reflective Blog as Learning Tool

Using the following scale, chose the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement. 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree

Answer Options	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
The Reflective Blog assisted me with my learning in PR393	28%	57%	9%	4%	2%	1.96
The Blog encouraged me to reflect critically on my placement experience	43%	47%	9%	0%	2%	1.72
The blog encouraged me to reflect critically on what I have learned at university	34%	47%	13%	6%	0%	1.91

The response to the Reflective Blog experience was overwhelmingly positive (Table 1), particularly in regards to the opportunity to exchange ideas and insights with other students, thereby ultimately expanding students' knowledge of and insight into the public relations industry:

> The Blog is a really good and innovative initiative, showing that Curtin is keeping pace with new trends. It's an excellent way of exchanging views and connecting with fellow students on other campuses.

> The blog was really great! It was great to be able to compare what you do with your other classmates and see how varied PR really is.

Some students were surprised about how much they actually enjoyed the blogging experience:

> This blog has been more beneficial than I ever expected, I find myself reading the long list of blogs and becoming so interested in my fellow students experiences and comparing this to my own.

> I found the blog fantastic! I learnt so much from what others had posted that it was incredible - even i (sic) was surprised! Not only was the blog a good tool for learning about others experiences but because blogging is such a popular

form of communication in todays (sic) society I found it great to practice my actualy blogginf (sic) skills as well. […] Overall i (sic) think that students can really benefit from this and i (sic) hope the blog stays a part of PR 393.

Overcoming isolation

Table 2. Student perception of 'connectedness'

Using the following scale, chose the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement. 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree

Answer Options	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
The blog provided me with an opportunity to exchange experiences with other PR393 students	74%	21%	2%	0%	2%	1.34
The Blog made me feel more 'connected'	55%	28%	15%	0%	2%	1.66

A feeling of isolation and disconnectedness was one of the problems traditionally identified with the Professional Placement Unit. However, 83% of participating students found that the blog assisted them in overcoming their geographical distance:

> The blog was extremely useful to feel connected to other work experience students and see how they handled problems and issues within their placements.

> Being essentially an external unit, i (sic) found that the 393 blogs allowed me to see what otehr (sic) students were doing, and made me feel like I had others to talk to about my experience. It reduced my concerns about the unit, which otherwise would have been quite isolating.

> It's really nice reading about similar experiences and situations that we are all going through together! It makes the real world look lots less scary.

A number of students further recognised the blog as an opportunity to re-connect with former classmates and peers, as well as the potential to network across campuses.

Internationalisation of the learning experience

62% of respondents stated that the blog had provided them with an international perspective of the public relations industry, thereby maximising the opportunities provided by running a unit across different campuses:

Table 3. Student perception of the potential of the Reflective Blog to provide an international perspective

Using the following scale, chose the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement. 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree

Answer Options	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
Reading other students' posts and exchanging ideas provided me with a better understanding of the public relations industry	66%	28%	4%	0%	2%	1.45
The Blog provided me with an opportunity to gain insight into how PR is practiced in other countries (international perspective)	30%	32%	23%	11%	4%	2.28

> The blog has provided much knowledge on the insights of the PR industry whether it is in Australia, Singapore or Mauritius, which would be very beneficial to students.

However, due to the majority of students being based in Perth during this initial trial phase, the benefit of internationalisation was predominantly felt by offshore students:

> Knowing the experiences of international perspective has given me new insights into PR industry not just in Singapore, but also in places I might not get to work in. I am very thankful to be able to read about fellow student's experiences. it kinda (sic) made me feel I'm 'there' with them.

Unfortunately, dissatisfied students chose not provide any qualitative feedback in this section.

Minimum requirements

Some students struggled with the prescribed minimum requirement of four original posts and four responses. Others participated more than required, excited about the opportunity to stay in touch with their peers and commenting on their own achievements, upcoming projects and job offers. Most students agreed with the minimum requirement (81%), acknowledging that without the pressure they would have struggled to find sufficient time for blogging and ultimately reflection on their placement experience.

> As much as the blog was great, I think unless it wasn't an assessment requirement i (sic) wouldn't have given it as much time and i (sic) think a lot of students would have the same feeling.

> If I was not forced to write them I don't think my analysis and feedback would have been as comprehensive

> I think there has to be some sort of reward (participation mark) for it, even if its (sic) only an incentive for 'bonus marks'. I found I was really short for time and if there was nothing that was going to increase my mark by sharing I may not have been as willing to contribute and write so much.

> Having it as an assessment piece means people will put more effort into it, it's a slightly discomforting feeling but as a student assessments take up majority of your time and are the main focus when studying, when things aren't compulsory, people tend to overlook them or not give them their full effort.

> If there were no marks allocated I think that I would be more interested in reading other peoples (sic) than actually contributing!

Respondents thereby admitted that they were predominantly interested in reading about others' experiences, rather than being keen on writing themselves, agreeing with Downes' (2004) notion that "*blogging is about, first, reading. But more important it is about reading what is of interest to you*" (p. 24). Arguably not

surprisingly, nobody suggested there should have been a higher minimum requirement of posts.

Having experienced the Reflective Blog, 64% of students stated they would participate in a similar activity in the future, even it if was solely for formative purposes:

> I did feel the blog helped me feel connected with other students and therefore would use it in the future, even if it wasn't part of my marks.

This is a lower level of agreement than in William and Jacob's (2004) study into MBA students' blogging experience, arguably confirming different learning priories at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. At the end of the trial, 81% of respondents agreed that they would like to see blogging used more widely as a learning/assessment tool in public relations and marketing;

> The blog is becoming a tool within the public relations industry and I believe it is essential for students to learn a new method of communication, but also be able to reflect on their placement experiences.

> It's so important in the industry that I think it would be appropriate for it to be used more often

However, a number of students pointed out that particularly the format of this individual tuition unit lends itself to the use of a blog.

> I think for this unit it is perfect because there is no set class interaction and everyone is off doing and experiencing different things but with other units, it wouldn't work as effectively because in this unit it is the perfect forum for students to interact whereas with other units, class time can be used.
>
> It really depends on the structure of the unit. For PR 393 it was usefull (sic) because it was a form of contact as we really only saw everyone twice over the semester.

From a Unit Coordinator perspective, the Reflective Blog provided an opportunity to pre-empt student concerns and to publish additional learning material, based on current issues interns were facing.

The alternative test

> This unit has been incredibly useful for our future career prospects. I feel I learnt a great deal of practical information that is difficult to teach in a class room set up

The higher education sector as seen a move away from permanency, towards an increased number of short and medium term contracts for academic staff. As I was being employed on a two year contract at the time, I was particularly interested to see the impact the Reflective Blog would have on the end of semester evaluation, one of my Key Performance Indicators at a university level. While it has to be acknowledged that the blog may have not been the sole contributor, qualitative student feedback indicates that it played a major role in the improved unit satisfaction (Curtin University of Technology, 2008). Overall, students appeared to feel more connected and motivated to provide feedback on their learning experience. Following the blog trial the end of semester evaluation response rate increased by 38% (n=56). Overall unit satisfaction was 100%, with above faculty and university wide average rating across all 11 eVALUate items. Without prompting, *critical thinking* and *reflective practice* were commented on in the optional, qualitative feedback sections.

CONCLUSION | THE FUTURE OF BLOGS IN TEACHING & LEARNING

The results from this study provide reasonably strong support to continue the use of blogs as part of placement units, particularly in order to encourage internationalisation of the curriculum and student exchange, as well as to combat isolation as a side effect of individual tuition units. Students who may be shy in the classroom were for the first time of their university career provided with an equal voice and an opportunity to shine. While some students clearly submitted their posts with a sole focus on marks and passing the unit, others fully embraced the learning opportunity and gained a far broader, complex and memorable insight into the industry than any *traditional* unit could have provided. During this trial, students demonstrated that they can learn as much – if not more - from each other than from an instructor or a textbook (Williams

& Jacobs, 2004), effectively supporting the shift away from mainstram textbook-based teaching, to more interactive, 'offbeat' learning opportunities. However, this study highlighted that students may not be as familiar with the new media environment and Web2.0 tools as widely assumed. Particularly weaker students required guidance, illustrating that information and web2.0 literacy may have been neglected as part of the current curriculum. Considering that interactive tools such as blogs are increasingly used as a crucial element in organisations' communication efforts, this knowledge gap will need to be addressed in order to equip public relations graduates adequately.

The success of the blog will have to be continuously monitored and re-evaluated. However, after the initial trial period, the blog has been embraced as an information portal for upcoming placement students. First hand accounts and insights are being furthermore integrated in current lectures and tutorials to provide a student-centred insight into the *real world*.

Blogging challenges

The Reflective Blog does have its shortcomings. Monitoring and administration tasks have developed into substantial burden on the Unit Coordinator. It is recommended to recruit additional administrative help in order to maximise in-house resources.

Furthermore, operating in a global forum is not a save option and puts students but also staff and the university itself under pressure. Some students appear to struggle with the idea that they are operating in an open, global forum, which can easily be accessed by current but also future employers. Two students have experienced first hand how their posts got picked up by their placement organisation's communication department within minutes of posting. Grammar, spelling, quality of writing and confidentiality are only some of the key concepts that need to be monitored in order to protect the reputation of the university and the course. This pressure and notion of risk will increase as other offshore locations are slowly joining the Reflective Blog. Personally, I have to admit that I have had a couple of sleepless nights when I first introduced the blog, however, how else would my students be able to gain a first hand insight into what is happening at Apple Computer Inc. in Kuala Lumpur? Or how a local communications agency operates in Singapore? Or how the Mauritian airport is coordinating its current restructure? Currently, I have two students working for the same organisation, one in Australia, one in Malaysia, both of

whom excitedly exchange insights. These are learning experiences that cannot be re-created in a classroom situation.

Future research is required into how much Unit Coordinators and support staff should get involved, or if the opportunity to provide additional material should be sacrificed for the *purity* of the blogging experience

---

[1] Latest blog statistics available from Technorati

REFERENCES

Alexander, B. (2006). Web 2.0:A new wave of innovation for teaching and learning. *Educause Review, 41*(2), 33-44.

Bailey, R. (2006). Richard Bailey's PR Education Blog - Guidelines for PR student blogs. Retrieved 12th May 2008, from http://prstudies.typepad.com/weblog/2006/07/guidelines_for_.html

Bain, J. D., Ballantyne, R., Packer, J., & Mills, C. (1999). Using journal writing to enhance student teachers' reflectivity during field experience placements. *Teachers and teaching, 5*(1), 51-73.

Bain, J. D., Mills, C., Ballantyne, R., & Packer, J. (2002). Developing reflection on practice through journal writing: Impacts of variations in the focus and level of feedback. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice, 8*(2), 171-196.

Beattie, K., & James, R. (1997). Flexible coursework delivery to Australian postgraduates: How effective is the teaching and learning? *Higher Education, 33*(2), 177-194.

boingboing.   Retrieved 10th April 2009, from http://boingboing.net/

Borko, H., Michalec, P., Timmons, M., & Siddle, J. (1997). Student teaching portfolios: A tool for promoting reflective practice. *Journal of teacher education, 48*(5), 345.

Boud, D., Keogh, R., & Walker, D. (1985). Promoting reflection in learning: a model. *Reflection: Turning experience into learning*, 18-40.

Boynton, L. A. (2007). COMMENTARIES: Commentary 1: This PR Firm Should Have Known Better. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics, 22*(2-3), 218-221.

Brown, G., Bull, J., & Pendlebury, M. (1997). *Assessing student learning in higher education*: Routledge.

Calderhead, J. (2006). Reflective teaching and teacher education. *Teacher Education, 5*(1), 35.

CollegeGrad.com. (2006). MySpace is Public Space when it comes to job search. Entry level job seekers - it's time to reconsider the web.   Retrieved 10th May 2008, from http://www.collegegrad.com/press/myspace.shtml

Curtin University of Technology. (2007). *eVALUate Full Unit Report, PR3993 - Evaluation period: 2007 Semester 2*.

Curtin University of Technology. (2008). eVALUate Full Unit Report, PR3993 - Evaluation period: 2008 Semester 1.

Dickey, M. D. (2004). The impact of web-logs (blogs) on student perceptions of isolation and alienation in a web-based distance-learning environment. *Open Learning, 19*(3), 279-291.

Divitini, M., Haugalokken, O., & Morken, E. M. (2005). Blog to support learning in the field: lessons learned from a fiasco. *Proceedings of the 5th IEEE International Conference on Advanced Learning Technologies (ICALT'05).*

Downes, S. (2004). Educational Blogging. *Educause Review, 39*(5), 14-26.

Duffy, P., & Bruns, A. (2006). The Use of Blogs, Wikis and RSS in Education: A Conversation of Possibilities.

Field, J. (2006). *Lifelong Learning And The New Educational Order*: Trentham Books.

Gray, D. M. (2007). *"Get Blogged": The Utility of Using a 'Blog' in a Senior Undergraduate Marketing Strategy Course*. Paper presented at the Anzmac 2007

Grossman, L. (2006). Time's Person of the Year: You. *Time Magazine, 13*.

Habermas, J. (1989). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society*: MIT Press.

Hernández-Ramos, P. (2004). Web Logs and Online Discussions as Tools to Promote Reflective Practice. *The Journal of Interactive Online Learning, 3*(1).

Huffington, A. The Huffington Post.   Retrieved 10th April 2009, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com

Hume, A. (2009). Promoting higher levels of reflective writing in student journals. *Higher Education Research & Development, 28*(3), 247-260.

Humes, B. (1999). Understanding Information Literacy.

Jay, J. K., & Johnson, K. L. (2002). Capturing complexity: A typology of reflective practice for teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 18*(1), 73-85.

Jonassen, D. H. (2000). *Computers as mindtools for schools: engaging critical thinking*: Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.

Kent, M. L. (2008). Critical analysis of blogging in public relations. *Public Relations Review*.

Lee, H. H. (2006). Corporate blogging strategies of the Fortune 500 companies The Authors Sang Lee, Department of Management, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, Nebraska, USA Taewon Hwang, Department of

Management, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, Nebraska, USA. *Management Decision, 44*(3), 316-334.

Lockwood, F., & Gooley, A. (2001). *Innovation in Open and Distance Learning: Successful Development of Online and Web-Based Learning*: Routledge.

Loughran, J. J. (2002). Effective reflective practice: In search of meaning in learning about teaching. *Journal of teacher education, 53*(1), 33.

Martin, J.-F. (2007). *How businesses are using Web 2.0: A McKinsey Global Survey*.

Moon, J. A. (1999). *Learning journals: a handbook for academics, students and professional development*: Routledge.

Morrison, K. (1996). Developing reflective practice in higher degree students through a learning journal. *Studies in Higher Education, 21*(3), 317 - 332.

Nardi, B. A., Schiano, D. J., Gumbrecht, M., & Swartz, L. (2004). Why we blog. *Communications of the ACM, 47*(12), 41-46.

onrec.com. (2007). Employers use Facebook for further background checks. Retrieved 10th May 2008, from http://www.onrec.com/newsstories/17612.asp

Oxford University Press. (2008). Oxford English Dictionary (Publication. Retrieved 10th April 2008, from Oxford University Press 2008 http://dictionary.oed.com.dbgw.lis.curtin.edu.au/

Plotnick, E. (1999). Information Literacy *ERCI Clearinghouse on Information and Technology Syracuse NY*.

Reid, I. C. (2001). Reflections on using the Internet for the evaluation of course delivery. *The Internet and Higher Education, 4*(1), 61-75.

Roberts, S. (2003). Campus Communications & the Wisdom of Blogging. *Syllabus Magazine*.

Schroeder, R. (2005). Blogging to disseminate best online learning practices and technology news. *19th Annual Conference on Distance Teaching and Learning*.

Shift Communications. (2007). *PR 2.0*.

Shireen Desouza, J. M., & Czerniak, C. M. (2003). Study of science teachers' attitudes toward and beliefs about collaborative reflective practice. *Journal of Science Teacher Education, 14*(2), 75-96.

Technorati. (2008). About us. Retrieved 3rd June 2008, 2008, from http://technorati.com/about/

Trunk, P. (2006, 16th April 2006). Bogs 'essential' to good career. *The Boston Globe*, from

http://www.boston.com/jobs/news/articles/2006/04/16/blogs_essential_to_a_good_career/

Weidlich, T. (2003). The corporate blog is catching on. *New York Times*.

Williams, J. B., & Jacobs, J. (2004). Exploring the use of blogs as learning spaces in the higher education sector. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology, 20*(2), 232-247.