FELTAG SIG at ALT-C 2016 - Notes on Proceedings

At ALT-C 2016, the FELTAG SIG met to consider the place and purpose of FELTAG over the coming year and from a discussion of themes agree topics for the upcoming series of ALT Webinars on FELTAG. These are the notes taken from the SIG.

1. The profile of the FELTAG title as a name and movement and whether there is now a more suitable alternative

Two major FELTAG themes agreed that characterise the movement are:

1. the removal of physical and cultural barriers to effecting change, and that this change is driven by teachers and student, enabled by managers.
2. e-learning 'counts' rather than being a supplement or augmentation to learning activity.

But progress has been problematic because:

- the area reviews and changes in Administration.
- drive for apprenticeships and other new policy imperatives intervening
- turbulence caused by OfSTED Inspections
- concerns that FELTAG is seen as offering an efficiency gain to aid cost saving rather than improving education.

The question was considered whether FELTAG as a discrete Movement had run its course and should now be assimilated into the general discourse, whilst acknowledging that the SIG does not own the title or movement so it is not for us to pronounce on it but we can have a view on it and promote that view either way.

Rather than opening up new designs, ideas and creativity, technology continues to be used in places to encourage compliance in approach and behaviour that ends up infantilising users rather than developing self-managed learning. Some felt technology has a habit of reducing people into compliant behaviour training, which only delivers very shallow learning rather than open thinking up into creativity and ideas.

e-learning is a 'new giant's shoulder' on which to stand, offering exciting new ways to approach education and not simply a way of doing the same but on a screen, using 'off the shelf' packages of processed learning that also turns teachers into ciphers.

All agreed that FELTAG is an anachronistic acronym for a non-existent group that doesn't describe these new possibilities. However, the unanimous view was that the term has 'traction' and is still cited in change happening in the Sector. The SIG felt that it has not yet run it's course and there is more to achieve under it's influence. The 10% on-line target was very instrumental and had 'caught the eye' of Principals, providing a drive-down into organisations to think differently about the role of technology. This influence over managers and Principals is seen as still having impact. SIG members from outside England asked that the name be modified rather than changed to include other UK countries beyond England. It is seen as an English construction.

The SIG agreed to stay with FELTAG but considered the option of adding a tag line to broaden its appeal to support other UK countries i.e. **FELTAG - 'education without barriers'.**

2. Themes and challenges emerging in aspects of e-learning

The SIG then discussed the emerging pedagogical and course design aspects as they will directly affect the *student experience of learning,* including assessment, personalised learning, capturing and recording employability, collaborative learning, flipping and project-based and enquiry-based learning. The SIG discussed the need to capture and present attributes and not just qualifications as being central to demonstrating learning and employability.

The group also considered the emergence of **learning contracts with agreed outcomes** as a mechanism for apprenticeships which was seen as an increasingly important theme. All students should be taught, develop and present the skills and attributes needed for self-employment, (which is the same for employability but 'more') reflecting the likelihood of FE and Skills students following this path. This was seen as part of the traditional role of FE to support the student personal development from school to the world of work.

Validity and reliability at school level upwards now seen as essential student study skills in supporting collaborative, project-based and enquiry-based learning.

The SIG also agreed on the importance of marshalling and presenting diversity using the properties of personal and personalised technology and personal devices.

Flipping learning and designing directed study become essential teaching skills.

3. Themes and challenges in emerging learning technology

The SIG then looked at wider issues of the development of technology around external influences, structure and the administration of learning. It recognised the use of e-ILPs, learner analytics, social media, capacity and capability, BYOD, supporting apprenticeships and employers, crowdsourced knowledge, and the increasing use of video and sound files.

The increased and increasing use of personal mobile devices by students was highlighted. Despite being over the tipping point, are we yet at a position to design learning to an expectation of the **equipped mobile student**? All agreed that a college supply should be available and having a laptop is as much a student tool as an exercise book and pen box.

The increasing importance of Personal Learning Space (PLS) in e-learning practice highlighted the centrality of digital literacy for all and self managed learning. But it might be seen not so much a set of competencies but behaviours. As a result, reflective learning for teachers and students is further highlighted. The need to capture and demonstrate accomplishments as well as achievements in individual learning journeys was agreed on as a modern learning design requirement. In Scotland there is evidence of portfolio usage that at every stage captures soft skills, demonstrating learning as a holistic development tool and not just one of competencies.

Apprenticeships have not been investigated to see how technology might help these students. The development of learning contracts between employers, apprentices and supporting colleges is seen as a new field of study.

Blended learning and Directed Study dynamics are now essential course design skills and teachers need to know how to do achieve these new designs, all heavily related to understanding the cognitive, affective, psychomotor domain split.

On-line assessment was highlighted, not just as a mechanism but as part of the new learning journey and what and how outcomes might be defined and presented.

4. Topics for future ALT Webinars

The following topics emerged from our discussion for ALT Webinars.

New course design for Reflective learning	Using technology to support unique Apprenticeship learning journeys	Digital literacy-in-action
Teaching the skills of self-employment	**Utilising personal learning spaces in learning design**	**Using technology to capture and present soft skills**

Geoff Rebbeck - FELTAG SIG Chair - 2016