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How are International Undergraduate Students Using Technology to Support their Learning?

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1. Purpose

In recent years there has been an increase both in the use of technology in higher education (Gurung & Rutledge, 2014; Lai et al., 2013; Laurillard, 2009) and in the numbers of international students studying in the UK (UKUniversities, 2014). Anecdotally it has been observed that these students often use and share social media and digital resources to support their studies. They also sometimes find the UK higher education environment strange and challenging. This study has surveyed 250 international Northumbria undergraduate students on how they use digital technologies to support their learning. This survey is based on the Digital Technologies and Informal and Formal Learning Framework (Strachan and Sanaa, 2015).

2. Key Findings

Students use mobiles and laptops as their main digital devices. Desktop computers are less popular. They use a variety of software including Blackboard, websites, youtube, email and wikis and typically spend more time using technology off campus than on campus.

Students usually work face to face with other students to share practice, resources and seek help to queries but email, messaging (e.g. SMS) and social media (e.g. facebook) are all popular too. They sometimes find it difficult to source relevant information from the web and occasionally have technical issues with the technology.

3. Originality/value

Students use a range of digital devices and tools both on and off campus. They frequently use technology for collaborative learning but not the formal university systems. These results suggest a re-evaluation of technology enhanced learning to ensure it is meeting student needs and builds on the approaches students are already using in their informal learning environments.

Keywords (up to 5)

Formal & informal learning, technology enhanced learning, international students, student support

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