Ennovate

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Innovative practices : Disability and Learner Support programme of Hugh Baird College

- Wikispaces Class-room – A Simple tool for Educators

"You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have."

— Maya Angelou

Innovative practices: Disability and Learner Support programme of Hugh Baird College

Brief introduction

The Hugh Baird College at Liverpool, UK offers hundreds of courses to more than 7,000 students. It offers an innovative learner support programme, individually tailored to help all students achieve their full potential. An additional support team is available to learners with learning difficulty, a sensory impairment, physical disability, dyslexic or if English is not his/her first language. Workshops in Maths, English or oth-er subjects are also available through the Skills Focus areas, where learners can   access extra support that they may need from time to time during their course.

Innovative features

The innovative features of this Disability and Learner Support programme are provided below:

1. Specialist Tutors: The tutors are specialists in teaching students with Autism, Visual Impairments, Hearing Impairments and Dyslexia. The team also consists of signers qualified to the highest level.

2. Specialist Software: They provide Supernova, JAWS, Read and Write, Inspirations and a full range of Inclusive technology available on loan.

3. Skills Focus Centre: The centre is set up to assist with Basic Skills needs, homework, assignments, essays and any academic problems that arise throughout the studies. The Skills Focus areas are located within the colleges Library and Learning Centres. They are staffed by a team of experienced lecturers and a learner can drop in at any time. Personal tutors can book students in to work through specific literacy and Nu-

meracy programmes. A learner can also get advice on constructing essays, referencing,   research and proofreading. The Skills Focus Centres are open 24 x 7.

4. In-class Academic Support Worker: This support is offered on a one to one basis or as part of a small group. The Academic Support Worker (ASW) can help with note-taking, prompting, recapping the tutors instructions and any practical activities. They can also help students with mobility problems in a classroom environment.

5. Additional Teaching Support Session: This is provided by a fully qualified support lecturer on a one to one basis or as part of a small group. These sessions can help with reading, spelling, writing, homework, assignments, essays and improving confidence. These sessions are also used as specific support with a learning difficulty, for example, techniques to help dyslexic students improve their abilities.

6. Care Support: A fully qualified and experienced care team is available that support students before and after classes, during breaks and during lunch times. They can support students personal care needs and provide mobility assistance. The care team can also help students settle into college life for the first few weeks until they make new friends.

7. Inclusive Technology: The Learner Support department has an extensive range of inclusive equipment and software so that everyone can access his or her course. They have screen readers such as Supernova and JAWS, as well as a range of software.

8. Exam Concessions: They can help a learner apply for exam concessions. Extra time, large print, the use of reader or a scribe if available along with many other types of concessions are also provided.

Possibility of adaptation

There is a strong need for such type of innovative learner support in India because a considerable population of students with learning disabilities are left out from the mainstream education. This innovative initiative can be adapted not only for learners with learning disabilities but also for remote learners in India to bring them into the mainstream.

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WkispacesClassroom – A Simple tool for Educators

Wikispaces is a web hosting service (also known as a wiki farm) providing community wiki spaces, visual page editing, and discussion areas. Wikispaces Classroom provides a social writing platform for education where the teachers and students can communicate and work on writing projects alone or in teams.

Figure 1: Wikispaces Classroom Home page

The Wikispaces Classroom can be accessed through bowser, tablets, or smart phones. The platform enables:

- **Classroom Management** –Wikispaces provides an online space to manage the activities, resources, conversations and projects related to a course. There are tools to create assignments, share resources, make announcements, and foster discussion and community.

- **Project based learning** - Wikispaces provides a simple structure to create projects, define teams, assign students and manage them till the successful completion of their projects. There are features like formative assessment reports that help to track the student progress on their projects.

- **Safe Social Networking**- Wikispaces provides safe social network for interacting with the students. It has privacy and security features to control access. An educator can connect and communicate with the students using a familiar newsfeed monitor complete history of student discussions, writing, and file uploads.

- **Knowledge Communities**- Wikispaces enables creation of collaborative knowledge communities by encouraging the use of a myriad of Internet resources, content, and tools.
- **Online and remote learning**- Wikispaces provides an online workspace for the educatorsand students to connect and exchange knowledge and information.
- **Real-Time Formative Assessment –** The educator can monitor the student engagement in real time and report on contributions to pages, discussions, and comments over time. The workspace enables the educator to focus on particular students or projects as required and view reports.

The platform is characterised by:

- **Simplicity -** Wikispaces is easy to use and easy to adopt for all kinds of audiences. The tool is simple so that one can focus on building content, talking with other members, and growing your community.
- **Community**- Wikispaces enables groups to publish and discuss content in the form of web pages that are regularly updated, and created by many contributors.
- **Openness –** The site is accessible from anywhere and anytime. Members can create pages and spaces without undue restrictions or rules.
- **Usability –** Wikispaces has a built-in visual editor and one can see the layout and design of the page while editing it. No technical knowledge is required.

Registration can be done by providing a username, email id and a password. After signing up one can create a Wiki page on the website by filling up a simple form (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Page for creating a New Wiki

The main classroom page (as shown in Figure 3) allows the educator to:

- Announce, schedule, and discuss in newsfeed at the bottom of the page.

- Create projects, with optional start and end dates for assignments.

- Add pages, files.

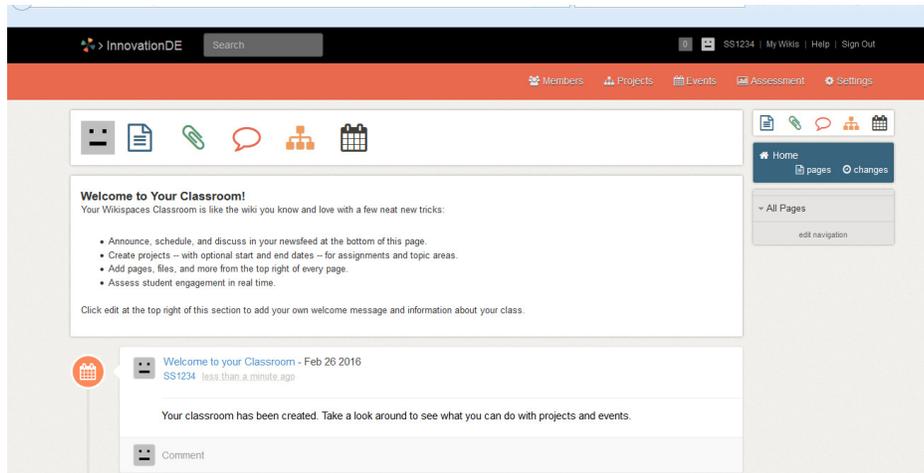- Assess student engagement in real time.

Figure 3: The Main Wikispace Classroom Page

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The term innovation is being used extensively in all walks of life including education, industry, agriculture, politics, etc. But, it has been observed that a majority of the people is confused with the terms like innovation, invention, creativity and discovery. Many a times, the first three terms are interchangeably used.

- Faculty should not discourage the students coming up with any kind of new and innovative idea or innovation.

- Appropriate support and funds should be made available to the innovative students/teachers.

- Awareness and programmes should be organized to motivate and guide the students.

- Conclusive environment for innovation.

- Encourage students and teachers for incremental innovations.

- Set up innovation and/or creativity clubs comprising of students and teachers.

- Organizing exhibitions/innovation Fests for the innovations of the students.

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The National Centre for Innovation in Distance Education (NCIDE) was established in December 2005. It is a facility for promoting, supporting, re-engineering and disseminating innovations in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system. The NCIDE is a ground for nurturing bright and inquisitive minds whose ideas and explorations are expected to revolutionise the ODL system to suit the needs of Gennext. The Centre's goal is to develop a culture of continued search for new and innovative solutions to offer seamless education for all, achieve cost efficiency in its operations and provide borderless access to quality education and training.

We look forward to receiving your suggestions for this e-newsletter. We also welcome your contributions for the future issues. Please send us your emails addressed to the Director, NCIDE at: ncide@ignou.ac.in.