

“You’re never alone!”

By Ian Guest

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Sometimes it's the unanticipated outcomes which have the biggest impact. For me it was a throw away comment, a chance remark...

...small talk.

“Have you tried Twitter?” asked Geoff Owen as we supped a coffee before one particular TELIC session. I hadn't and in fact other than using an online bookmarking service, had no experience of social media and very little online presence ... and I wouldn't have if someone whose expertise and opinion I had a great deal of respect for hadn't suggested it.

Fortunately, it being a TELIC session, there were other people sufficiently interested to motivate each other to try the experiment.

That characterises people on TELIC. They're open to possibilities; prepared to have a go.

I'm Ian and I work in a school where I lead the ICT Support Team and champion the use of technology to support, enhance and extend learning. Registering on TELIC for the opportunity to explore those areas in a rigorous and reflective manner was an easy decision, especially since it provided an opportunity to learn within an international community.

So to return to the story...

...Prodded by Geoff and supported by TELIC buddies, my first tentative explorations with Twitter served as the seed from which an increasingly richer personal leaning network blossomed.

Linking with other interesting and innovative educators and learners, both in the UK and around the world, opened up a wealth of exciting opportunities, some of which fed back into TELIC studies and others which contributed directly to my role and responsibilities at work.

The tendrils spreading out from posts on Twitter led to a diverse range of rich experiences which challenged my thinking and encouraged me to re-examine received wisdom back at school.

And what I learn from those experiences then expands the way I think about the provision we offer in school ... for both students and staff.

Let me give you an example. I 'met' Nick Jackson on Twitter.

He was an innovative Head of ICT at a school in York, also studying for a Masters. We'd occasionally exchange tweets, began to comment on each other's blog posts and challenge each other's thinking. Shortly after meeting in 'real' life at a "Teachmeet", Nick emigrated to Australia to begin a new career in Higher Education.

(I tend to have that effect on people!)

However, our networked links mean we stay in touch and have just jointly written our first published article ... despite being ten thousand miles apart in distance and half a day in time.

It was TELIC that set me on the path to making that connection and TELIC that provided me with the skill and confidence to work in such a way.

So the consequence of that chance remark and the personal learning network which grew from it has been to make me a far more proactive learner, to become more reflective and critical and therefore better-informed, to become more fully rounded and increasingly effective at supporting and advising our students, my colleagues and our school.

In a personal learning network you're never alone.