

**What impact does social media, information and
communications technology have on an individual's ability
to learn?**

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Frontispiece

This is to certify that this research project is the result of the investigation that was carried out by the student, except for where specific reference is made. The research project nor any part of it has been presented, or is currently being submitted in candidature of any aware other than in part for the degree of BA (Hons) in Primary Education with QTS of University of Wales Trinity Saint David. I understand that any work I use without reference constitutes as plagiarism, which will lead to the failure of this module.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research project aims to explore the effect that social media, information and communications technology (ICT) has on a learner's overall wellbeing and therefore, their levels of attainment in school. It will seek to interrogate the benefits and limitations that are a result of exposure to social media and the specific psychological and physical effects that they have on an individual's ability to learn successfully.

Social media is an important component of modern day society and plays a key role in the way in which humans communicate. It is becoming increasingly prevalent in current times with the usage and development of technology predicted to increase in the future. Therefore, it is important that thorough research is conducted in this field to establish the true effects it has on learning and development and in turn, propose the implementation of appropriate strategies to combat the issues that arise with its usage.

The author believes that social media usage and overexposure to ICT is at an all-time high with children and young adults being at the forefront of the rapidly expanding domain. They have witnessed first-hand how discussions about and the use of devices in schools has increased, as the youngest age of consumers of this technology gets lower each year. With this influx of individuals at school age using social media regularly, comes the potential for a variety of issues to arise. For example, bullying taking a new form in cyberbullying and children being vulnerable to grooming online. The dangers that accompany internet use may not have been present within schools previously, therefore it is essential that education practitioners familiarise themselves with current research that explores the effects of social media on well-being and attainment.

Through the use of research methods that include interviews, questionnaires, observations and field notes, the relationship between social media usage and well-being in learners will be explored, with links made to research that has been previously conducted within the same topic area.

Social media can be defined as 'digital tools' that many people use in the social and work elements of their everyday lives (Poore, 2016,p4). With this definition in mind, it is evident

that social media is very useful and convenient for a lot of people, as it provides accessibility to a wider range of resources and it can improve communication all over the world.

Furthermore, advances in technology and social media allow people from different parts of the earth to collaborate and connect in a way that may not have been possible before.

The author's interest in this particular subject area stems from their own experiences and exposure to social media and ICT within the comprehensive school that they attended. They believe that the rise of social media had both a positive and detrimental impact on their education in different respects. Furthermore, whilst on a Professional Teaching Experience (PTE), it was observed that nearly all of the learners were using at least one form of social media daily and this initiated the author's enthusiasm towards learning more about the topic area.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Internet usage amongst children

Child Trends (2018) discuss a number of statistics relating to children and their usage of the internet, information and communications technology (ICT). One finding states that in 2015, approximately three in five children, between the ages of three and seventeen (60 percent) have access to and use the internet in their households. This statistic has vastly increased from the year of 1997, where only eleven percent of children had internet access at home. A similar trend increase is that the use of the internet has a positive correlation with age. The author found that ‘around 41 percent of children ages 3 to 5 use the internet at home, compared with 57 percent of 6 to 11-year-olds’. These statistics demonstrate the decrease in the age of the youngest users of social media, information and communications technology.

One fundamental issue of research relating to social media and ICT usage is that it is an ever-evolving concept, thus rapidly placing many research projects out of date. This means that explorations need to be undertaken frequently in order to keep findings and results both modern and relevant.

2.2 Digital Competence in schools across Wales

The Welsh Government introduced the Digital Competence Framework (DCF) in 2016 which serves a guidance tool for teachers implementing a wider range of computing and ICT skills. The framework suggests that the advantages of online communications should be introduced to pupils in schools in year 2, ‘begin to identify and explain the advantages and disadvantages of digital media and devices on their lives’ (Welsh Government, 2016). However, due to the fact that the age of children having access to and using the internet in a variety of ways is becoming increasingly lower (Child Trends, 2018), it could be argued that educational practitioners must consider introducing the negative effects that online communication can have on an individual at a much younger age. This could then reduce and eliminate some of the potential risks that accompany exposure to social media, information and communications technology. Furthermore, the Digital Competence Framework (DCF) does not incorporate the teaching of the dangers of overexposure to social media, information and communications technology until year 4, when it has been found that children as young as three years old are using technology in their leisure time.

Individuals who are part of the ‘first digital generation’ have seemingly acquired a different set of skills to those who are a part of the ‘second digital generation’. It is believed that the second digital generation has become naturally skilled with the use of social media and communication technologies rather than specific computer skills (Fortunati, Taipale and de Luca., 2017,p108).

In his report *Successful Futures*, Professor Graham Donaldson outlines suggested aims of the curriculum in schools across Wales. He believes that the curriculum should be ‘responsive’ to meet the needs of modern day society. Furthermore, he states that it should be ‘empowering’ so that pupils feel confident enough to live their lives in a rapidly evolving world (2015,p14). This further supports the idea that educational practitioners must consider the ways in which they incorporate education for and about exposure to social media, information and communications technology.

2.3 Social media, ICT and mental health

It has been said that early childhood is a time where an individual forms the basis for good mental-health to continue throughout their lives (Musgrave, 2017,p80). However, there are many aspects of social media, information and communications technology that can have an impact on a child’s well-being and therefore, their ability to learn. For example, exposure to bullying in the form of cyberbullying, exploitation through ‘sexting’ to name a few (Poore, 2016,p81).

It has been said that overexposure to social media, information and communications technology can have a negative impact on an individual’s mental health and well-being. Hardy and Castonguay discuss how social networking sites can act as a trigger for stress within certain individuals. They exemplify social networking sites with ‘Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat’. The authors explore how use of these social networking sites can have an effect on anxiety levels in an individual through a physical response of ‘an increased heart rate due to excitement, jealousy, confusion etc.’ Users with a predisposition of anxiety disorders may experience triggered feelings as their bodies are stimulated by these online interactions (2018,p282).

In their findings, Hardy and Castonguay explain how there is a positive relationship between the number of social media platforms that an individual uses and the onset of feelings that they were about to experience a ‘nervous breakdown’. However, this was only true of the adult sample as in young adults ‘use of more social media platforms equated to better mental well-being’ (2018,p286). This could be due to the environment that the younger generation has been raised in, where the use of social media is a societal norm and not something that they have had to adapt to like their older counterparts. This is supported by Prensky (2001) who has argued that ‘millennials were born into a world with the Internet and are accustomed to technology being a major part of their lives.’

The notion of social media impacting mental health is seconded by Pantic. In their research within a high school setting, a ‘statistically significant positive correlation between depressive symptoms and time spent on SNS’ was found (2014,p653). Individuals who frequently use social networking sites (SNS) have been found to experience feelings of envy, which are then followed by negative emotions of ‘loneliness, anger, and depression’. It has also been found that the probability of males feeling negative emotions is higher than females when using social networking sites such as Facebook (Lin et al. 2017,p618-p621). Yet still, Hill and Zheng conducted research on the impact that social media has on an individual’s well-being and found that there was not a significant relationship between types of social media usage and symptoms of depression. They suggest that any positive relationship between these two variables is based upon a number of other factors and individual preferences (2017,p1127).

The term technostress was introduced to describe ‘any negative impact on attitudes, thoughts, behaviors, or body physiology that is caused either directly or indirectly by technology’ (Weil & Rosen, 1997,p5). The effects that have been described in the aforementioned studies can, therefore, be described as ‘technostress’. Children of school age who are frequent users of social media and ICT are susceptible to a range of emotional and behavioural problems throughout their lives as these children experience the psychological distress that has been found to accompany this. These children may then be less able to concentrate and form healthy relationships in their school life as they encounter these difficulties (Underdown, 2007,p125). On the other hand, Radovic et al. (2017) argue that technology can improve children and young people’s mental health and well-being as they are able to communicate

with others and gain knowledge and understanding about themselves that they may not be able to do without access to the internet.

2.4 Social media, ICT and attention

Social media and ICT has become increasingly accessible as technology advances and mobile phones are carried on one's person at all times. This extends to school, where the majority of pupils will have their mobile phones in their bags or pockets during lessons. Czerwinski, Cutrell & Horvitz, (2000) argue that social media usage serves as a distraction to its users in many aspects of their lives. They state that users lose focus on an original task when presented with an interruption. This then has a 25-minute impact on their ability to return to the psychological state of mind that they were in during the original task. However, Hardy and Castonguay put forward that millennials 'switch attention between media platforms 27 times per hour, compared to 17 times per hour among those in other generations' (2018,p287). This suggests that this generation are better equipped to multitask when the use of social media is involved in at least one of the tasks. There is the potential for future research to be conducted on the role that social media and mobile phone serves as a specific classroom-based distraction.

2.5 Social media, ICT and its impact on skills

In their Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, ESTYN identifies how children's wellbeing and attitudes to learning have changed over the previous academic year. They concluded that in around 50 percent of the schools inspected, pupils' ability to 'work independently and persevere to solve problems, make decisions about their own learning, and seek alternative solutions' needed improvement (2018,p27). One possible reason behind this finding is that children have a higher degree of accessibility to a wider range of resources and information through the use of search engines. This is supported by Brooks' research, which found that there is an impact of technology within the classroom. They discuss how introducing and improving the technology within schools has been regarded as an important feature of modernisation, with many children now having access to laptops and iPads in the classroom. They state that this can have both a positive impact on learning but can cause 'some hindrances to success' (2015,p33)

Contradicting this is research that was undertaken by Rideout (2012). In the sample of teachers that were interviewed, it was found that 46% believed that entertainment media had

improved their students reading skills. Moreover, 63% of the interviewed sample believed that research and multi-tasking skills had improved greatly amongst their students who use entertainment media.

There is a general consensus throughout the modern day population that excessive use of social media, comes at the cost of the development of a range of social skills. The reasoning behind this is that people sometimes favour using a device to communicate with others over a direct, face-to-face interaction. Within a research project, it was found that 40.9 percent of the adolescent sample reported that they have better social relationships through internet usage. 71.7 percent reported that they use their mobile phones to communicate with their parents with 14.3 percent stating that the internet builds a strong and close relationship that they have with their parents (Moawad and Ebrahim, 2016,p174). Yet it has been stated that the internet has weakened the ‘authority type relationship between adults and children’ (Wyness, 2006,p81).

Lara argues ‘technology or social media does not always help with social change, it is only convenient’ (2016,p5). This suggests that the use of social media and ICT to communicate has not enhanced an individual’s ability to communicate with others and form healthy social relationships, but it has produced a generation of people who value convenience and time efficiency over the development of personal skills.

Vygotsky’s theory of mediation and communicable systems outlines the process that takes place when children identify themselves as part of a culture by observing and taking part in social activities with others (1981). With these social interactions taking place online rather than the reality of a child’s life, there lies a risk that the child may experience feelings of isolation and a self-identity crisis may occur.

2.6 Social media, ICT and Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

One area that is seemingly understudied is the effect that social media, information and communications technology usage has on individuals with additional learning needs (ALN). It has been found that a large proportion (64 percent) of young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have high levels of usage of non-social media. For example, televisions, streaming videos, and computer games. It followed that only 13.2 percent of these young people used technology for email and messaging (Mazurek et al., 2011,p1761). One area for

future research is to explore trends in young people with ASD, their usage of social networking sites and ICT and the impact this has on their well-being. These findings can then be translated into the effect that this has on their ability to learn.

Siedman (2013) explored specific personality characteristics and the effect that SNS usage has on these traits. It was found that those individuals with extrovert tendencies use SNS to compensate for the relationships that they have in reality. Future research may seek to explore the effect that SNS usage has on individuals with personality traits that are symptomatic of certain ALNs. From this, schools can then consider the way in which they educate children with additional learning needs, on the dangers of internet usage, to minimise the risks that an online presence presents.

Chapter 3: Methodology and research design

A variety of research methods were used to attain further research and understanding to answer the question ‘What effect does social media, information and communications technology (ICT) have on an individual’s ability to learn?’

These include:

- Literature research
- Interviews
- Observational notes
- Questionnaires
- Learning Walks

By incorporating a variety of methods to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data one improves the accuracy of the results. It has been stated that mixed methods are used “to assess a given phenomenon, in order to enhance confidence in the validity of the findings.” (Greene et al., 2011,p259).

The method of using interviews was one that was favoured due to the fact that the researcher wished to obtain honest, accurate results from first-hand discussions with the participants. Due to the fact that the research topic contains areas that have the potential to be sensitive, interviews provide opportunities for the discussion to be steered away from what is not necessary to aid the research. This is something that may not always be possible with other research methods. One other advantage of using interviews for the purpose of this research is the fact that not all aspects are quantifiable, as there is a strong social element underpinning the proposed question. It has been argued that “Many phenomena are fluid social constructions rather than firm facts.” (Alderson cited in Hood et al, 1999,p56) This contributes to the notion that interviews are a beneficial tool when conducting research in an area that has a dominant social element, as unlimited qualitative data can be collected. However, on the contrary, it could be argued that participants may feel less inclined to provide an honest and accurate reflection of their opinions throughout, due to the sensitive nature of the topics being discussed. Interviewees may feel uncomfortable answering certain questions if they are unclear of the intention of each specific question. In order to overcome this, one must ensure that each individual participant is clear on exactly what each question is

asking and be fully briefed prior to the interview, that they do not have to answer any questions that they do not wish to do so. Lee explains how “privacy, confidentiality and a non-condemnatory attitude are important because they provide a framework of trust.” (1995,p98). This trusting researcher and participant relationship increases the chances of the participant disclosing their true thoughts, feelings and experiences regarding the subject matter. It has been discussed that “conducting interviews is taxing, especially for inexperienced researchers” (Creswell 2007,p140). This statement suggests that interviews are not always the most time efficient method for research projects. To overcome this, the researcher ensured that questions were planned in advance in order to facilitate a meaningful discussion that was relevant to the subject.

Evidence to support the research was also collected through the use of observations and the corresponding notes. These observations took place within a comprehensive school setting, from year seven classes through to sixth form classes. The aim of these observations was to observe the level of distraction that social media and ICT usage has on classroom lessons. Furthermore, how ICT and social media can be used to benefit the way in which children learn and facilitate an adaptation to meet the demands of the future.

It has been argued that the degree of reliability of observing children within their natural environment is reliant upon the consistency that the researcher takes in their actions of observing (Pellegrini, 1996,p104). A researcher must explicitly list what they intend to perceive across all observations, to establish cause and effect relationships with regards to gender, age and many more factors that may influence the findings. In order to ensure a high level of consistency throughout, the researcher set out a list of behaviours that they were looking for when observing the learners in the classroom environment.

These include:

- Using their mobile phone or device underneath the table so that the teacher could not see
- Using their mobile phone or device when the teacher was talking or giving instruction
- Checking notifications on their mobile phone or device during class time
- Discussions with their peers about their social media that were not relevant to the lesson
- The noise of an individual’s mobile phone or device serving as a disruption to the lesson
- The teacher having to verbally communicate to the learner to stop using or put away their mobile phone or device

Ethical implications are an important factor to consider when undertaking research that is founded on a sensitive topic area. Ethical research involves the thought process behind what is moral, as opposed to what is practical (Denscombe 2003,p175). To overcome any issues that may arise, the researcher ensured participants that their responses would be kept entirely confidential at all times. In addition to this, informed consent was gained from all of the individuals who participated in the research tasks. To further aid ethical research, a completed copy of an ethical approval form was carried with the researcher during the school-based experience, available for all participants and senior leadership to view at any given time. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989,p5) were kept in mind when completing the research, more specifically Article 13 which outlines a child's right to express their opinions, thoughts and feelings with regards to matters that affect them. However, careful consideration was taken to ensure that the children were able to do so without risking any element of their personal safety. The school's safeguarding procedures were discussed between the researcher and a senior member of staff at the beginning of the school-based experience so that the safety of all participants was of paramount importance.

Questionnaires were used in order to obtain information on specific elements of the research subject that may not have been possible through the use of other methods. For example, the data that was quantifiable was gathered through the use of the questionnaires as it was a method of ease to the researcher. Questionnaires were distributed to a number of pupils within the school with an accompanying cover letter (please see appendix 2) which outlined the purpose of the study and included the details of the researcher. In addition to this, the participants completed a consent form that was attached to all of the questionnaires that were issued.

Kumar discusses the many advantages of using questionnaires within a research design. One benefit is that it allows for a higher degree of anonymity as there is no direct interaction between the researcher and participant at the time of the questions being answered. Kumar explains how this increases the probability of the provision of honest, accurate answers. (2005,p130). As a result of this, the level of internal validity increases. On the contrary, one potential drawback of issuing the research questionnaire is that 'prestige bias' may occur. This is where the participants feel that they may benefit from answering the questions in a manner that will convey a positive reflection of their social media and ICT usage (Thomas,p208). For example, a pupil may wish to indicate that they do not frequently use

social media, due to the social stigma surrounding high levels of internet usage. Fifty questionnaires were completed by students within every year group in the school to attain a variety of responses. The researcher wanted to gather data from different genders and age groups to ensure a higher degree of population validity within the responses provided.

In the event that the research was to be replicated, the researcher would include differentiated questionnaires so that greater comparisons could be made between different genders, to establish interesting cause and effect relationships to aid future research. Furthermore, samples from children within a primary school setting would favourably be attained to develop the scope of understanding that the impact of social media and ICT has on an individual's ability to learn. Scott argues that "In surveys of the general population, children have been usually regarded as out of scope" with the desired target participants usually being adults (2008,p87). Therefore, it is evident that the opinions of children must be included in order to facilitate a deeper understanding.

The findings were then presented in a report to senior management within the school (please see appendix 3).

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

Within this chapter, the author will discuss both the qualitative and quantitative findings that were produced as a result of the research. All results were analysed in detail to identify trends and formulate a discussion.

4.1 Statistics

Question 1

Do you bring a mobile/phone device to school?

When asked if they bring a mobile phone/device to school, 94 percent of the participants who were issued with a questionnaire answered ‘Yes’. With only 6 percent answering that they do not bring a mobile phone/device to school. One potential disadvantage of this particular question is that the question did not state a time within it. For example, participants may have answered no because they do not bring a mobile phone/device to school every day. However, the result obtained reflects that a large proportion of pupils have access to social media and the internet during school hours and this poses a potential threat to concentration levels within sessions.

Question 2

Does your mobile phone/device distract you during class time?

46 percent of the questioned participants stated ‘No’ to their mobile phone or device serving as a distraction during class time. 54 percent admitted that their mobile phone or devices distract them during their lessons (please see figure 1).

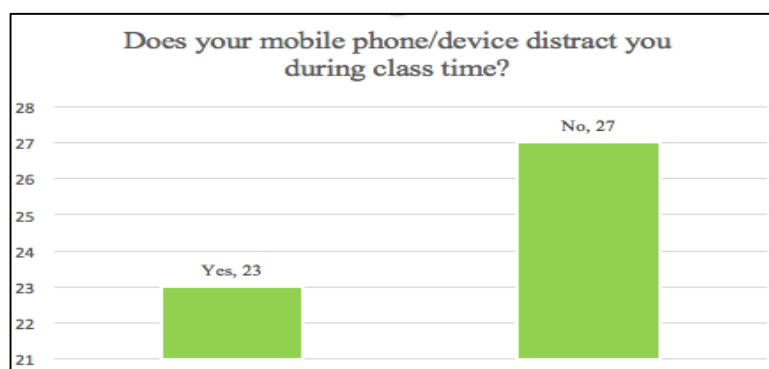


Figure 1

This finding can pose as problematic due to research that was discussed in chapter 2 by Czerwinski, Cutrell & Horvitz (2000) who state that there is a 25-minute cognitive impact on an individual when they are presented with an interruption. This is especially detrimental in a school environment as lessons typically last around sixty minutes. If a learner is interrupted by their device or notification from their social media platform, then it may take them nearly 1/3 of the session to regain focus on the relevant task.

Question 3
Do you feel that social media has an impact on your education?

When asked if they thought that social media has had an impact on their education, the majority of participants answered ‘No’ (78 percent). This was opposed to the 22 percent that believes it has had an impact on their education. When asked to elaborate on their answers, the responses varied. One individual stated:

“Not social media, maybe technology. But you don’t use many or any social media sites in class, and if anything, they’re blocked for our use.”

A participant who opposes to this view stated that:

“It can be a distraction, even if you’re revising on it.”

These responses provide an insight into the direct effect that usage of social media and technology has within the classroom. However, it must be noted that many of the participants stated that the use of social media outside of the classroom does not have an impact on their education. This contradicts what was suggested during an interview with a well-being officer within the school.

Question 4
Do you feel that social media has an impact on your well-being?

72 percent of the participants answered ‘Yes’ to feeling that the use of social media has impacted on their well-being. With 28 percent answering ‘No’.

When asked to elaborate on their answer, one individual stated that:

“I don’t want to put my device down when I should be asleep. This impacts my well-being as I don’t get sleep, meaning I’m tired and unhappy in school.”

However, one participant answered:

“No. I’m not influenced by what I see on a screen. My own opinion, my friends and my family are what matters to me.”

Another participant in agreeance stated:

“Personally, I do not allow other irrelevant things to bother me in school.”

The nature of these responses is a particularly interesting finding as it contradicts many of the studies that were explored in the literature review of the research project. For instance, it disagrees with Hardy and Castonguay’s (2018) research, which implied that social media triggers symptoms of stress in individuals who use it.

4.2 Social media versus Physical communication

After careful analysis of the questions contained in the questionnaire related to communication, it was found that social media has a significant impact on the way in which people communicate. When asked ‘Do you use your mobile phone/device when a person is talking to you?’ only 26 percent answered ‘Never’. 30 percent answered ‘Sometimes’ and 44 percent answered ‘Often’ (please see figure 2).

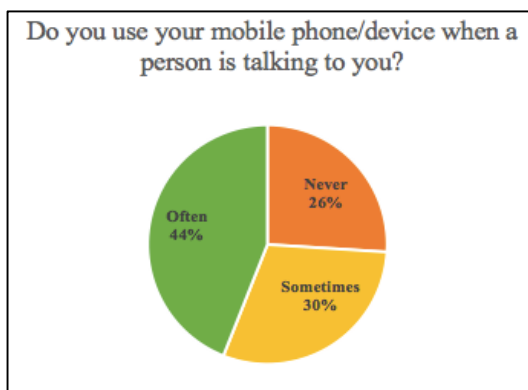


Figure 2

Similar results were found when the question was raised of ‘Do you prefer using a mobile phone/device/social media to communicate, rather than a physical conversation?’ 30 percent of the sample stated ‘Never’ with 64 percent answering ‘Sometimes’ and 6 percent stating ‘Often’.

These findings suggest that these pupils are sacrificing their development of social skills for online communication.

4.3 Additional Learning Needs

The researcher believed that it would be beneficial to conduct an interview with an Additional Learning Needs (ALN) coordinator in order to attain further knowledge on the impact that social media, information and communications technology has on this group of learners. This is an area that was identified as needing further research within the author’s initial literature research. It was discussed that some of the students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) have been impacted by the use of social media outside of school. This is due to the nature of their disorder. For example, they take literal meaning from what people say to them and do not recognise social cues easily. This is something that is especially problematic online as tone cannot be expressed in written communications.

Furthermore, some children with ASD prefer to complete tasks in a certain way, meaning that they can be exploited and taken advantage of online. The teacher continued to explain that a person could ask a learner with ASD for indecent images online and the individual would feel obliged to do so. It was then discussed that some children with ALNs display obsessive behaviour and have begun mimicking the behaviours that they have observed online. One example that was provided is that of the computer game Fortnite. Children within this particular unit who play the game had started to draw guns and mimic the violent actions that take place within the game. Due to the fact that social media and ICT are hard to monitor at all times, there lies a potential for children with ALNs to be exposed to explicit images or videos. This can then impact on their well-being as they feel distressed and this is then brought into school.

The teacher talked of how there has been a physical toll on the learners who excessively use social media and ICT and how this has had an impact on their school work. For example, those who have obsessive tendencies as a part of their disorder have become addicted to online games and chatrooms as they feel they cannot go to sleep until they have completed a

game or ended a conversation. The teacher described that children have been exhausted throughout the school day as they had major sleep disturbance throughout the night and a general lack of rest. This then negatively affected their school work as they were unable to concentrate on tasks and activities.

4.4 Focus Group Interview

The author conducted a focus group discussion with some of the older pupils within the school, in order to broaden the scope on the effect that social media plays in their school lives. Initially, it was stated by one group member that they feel that social media does have an impact on their well-being. The participant described how it has placed pressure on young learners to achieve success in school, in order to be able to afford a lifestyle that is portrayed in the media as being really important.

The group explained that the school had blocked out all access to social media and cellular signal through the infrastructure of the building. The general consensus amongst all of the learners within the school is that this is a poor decision, as the internet is essential in different aspects of their school life. For example, keeping in contact with peer and group chats, which are used as a platform outside of school to discuss work and group projects. They stated that this work cannot be transferred into school work as access is blocked as soon as they enter the school building.

One group member discussed how she felt that the impact of social media on school life is only affected by the individual's level of vulnerability. This is something that she had not experienced as she felt comfortable within herself. The previous point that was raised by one group member sparked a debate. One member of the focus group felt that girls are more affected than boys with regards to the impact that social media has on well-being. One other felt quite strongly that this was not the case and that it is equal now with suicide rates being higher in males in modern society. It was also stated that this could be due to the pressures that young people now face.

The group agreed that they felt that the younger pupils within the school have attitudes that differ from their own at that age and that this was not positive. When asked if they felt that these younger learners had these differing attitudes as a result of the forfeit of certain social skills due to social media, they believed that this was true and that instant access to

information on social media and the internet has led to children displaying demanding characteristics. They explained how this was then displayed in classrooms as pupils speak in a rude manner to teachers and other students within the school.

Members of the focus group then discussed that one drawback of mobile phone/social media usage is that it is difficult to yield a proper response from someone, as you cannot gauge their tone over written communication. They stated that this can cause problems as arguments occur and are brought forward into school. In turn, this was said to disrupt learning within the classroom for those involved and their peers.

The final point that was raised by the group was in response to being asked ‘Should children in primary schools have access to social media within the classroom, for educational purposes?’ The consensus of the group was strong in that they all stated that pupils in primary schools should not be denied access to social media and the internet, but they should be taught how to deal with the consequences of its use in more depth in order to minimise the element of risk.

4.5 Education for e-safety – An interview with the well-being centre

The researcher thought that it would aid the discussion, to conduct an interview with the officers that work within the school’s well-being centre. This provided an opportunity to gauge a response from those who experience the direct response that social media, information and communications technology has on the well-being and mental health of pupils within the school. When asked about the education that pupils receive about the dangers of social media, it was explained that it is rarely discussed other than the annual e-safety week that is held within the school.

It was also indicated that there needs to be a higher degree of importance placed upon e-safety, as a high volume of the issues that are presented to the well-being officers are instigated by social media. The officer agreed that this has a direct negative impact on school work, as learners often have to leave their classes in order to attend a resolution session within the well-being centre. The final statement from the interviewee was in agreement with the ALN co-ordinator who was previously interviewed. They stated that children are often coming into school exhausted because they had been using their mobile phone or device

throughout the night. Therefore, their ability to concentrate decreases and ultimately, their attainment has suffered.

4.6 Observations

The researcher observed a number of classes to explore the level of disruption that mobile phones and devices serve during lessons. It was found that the majority of pupils were looking at their phones underneath the tables when they believed that they were not visible to the teacher hosting the session. Furthermore, a number of auditory disruptions occurred during sessions as a result of notifications generating a sound on mobile phones and devices. This was despite the clear rules that were set out and displayed in corridors and classrooms, that mobile phones should not be used within lessons, under any circumstance.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Research aim

The aim of the conducted study was to attain information on the effect that social media, information and communications technology has on an individual's ability to learn.

5.2 Conclusion

The qualitative results of this research indicate that there is a strong case for change in the way that education for the dangers of the use of social media is delivered in schools at present. Although schools conduct annual e-safety weeks, the pressures and experiences that children and young people are now faced with, call for a stronger emphasis on the risk of an online presence. This is especially important for learners who have additional learning needs, who are vulnerable to being exploited online. The symptoms of their disorders are not something that has been taken into consideration when they are given access and this is something that schools need to address.

Interestingly, some of the quantitative data that was collected contradicted many studies that have been conducted previously. Many of the learners believed that social media has no impact on their well-being or their ability to learn as they set clear boundaries for themselves, both in and out of school. However, there were some learners who stated that their use of social media, information and communications technology does have an impact on both their physical and psychological well-being, as a result of lowered self-esteem and sleep disturbances, which are factors that are then brought into school.

5.3 Implications

One implication of this study is that the researcher did not obtain data from learners with additional learning needs (ALN), as the ALN coordinator was selected as a participant. For future research, it is recommended that ALN learners are questioned directly so as to obtain their point of view. This can then be used to aid the way in which schools plan for education for the effect that social media, information and communications technology has on this group of learners' ability to learn.

5.4 Professional Learning

Further research may wish to seek the extent to which the Welsh Government provide education on e-safety for learners with additional learning needs. Furthermore, how collaborations and multi-agency links benefit the overall well-being of social media and ICT users and how this has a positive impact on their entire education.

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Appendix 1: Ethical Approval Form



PG2 / E1 FORM

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

Full Name:	Chloe Ruth Mitchell		
Tick all boxes which apply:			
Member of staff:	☐	Student:	☒
Honorary research fellow:	☐		
Faculty/School/Centre:	SWWCTE: YR ATHROFA		
Campus:	Carmarthen		
E-mail address:	1601557@student.uwtsd.ac.uk		
Contact Telephone Number:	07720782312		
For students:			
Student Number:	1601557	Undergraduate	☒
Programme of Study:	BA Primary Education (QTS)	Taught Postgraduate	☐
Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Dr Sioned V Hughes	Research	☐

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)		YES	☒	NO	☐
		Date			
If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known):	Research Degrees Committee	☐			
	Faculty Research Committee	☐			
	Other (write in) Module Coordinator, ECAD6003, ITET	☒	08/02/19		

Approval in principle **must** be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval.

SECTION C: External Ethical Guidance Materials

Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines.	
The research is within the bounds of the normal classroom and in accordance with the Athrofa guidelines for parental consent as per Athrofa letter.	☒
The research will be conducted within BERA (British Educational Research Association) guidelines - Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2018)	☒
The research will adhere to the University research guidelines	☒
The research will adhere to the Education Workforce Council (EWC)	☒

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

Does the research activity involve collaborators outside of the University?	YES	☐	NO	☒
If Yes, please provide the name of the external organisation and name and contact details for the main contact person:				
Institution				
Contact person name				
Contact person e-mail address				

Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	YES	☐	NO	☒
If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation				

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

Indicative title:	An exploration into the effect that social media has on learners' wellbeing and attainment.		
Proposed start date:	11/02/2019	Proposed end date:	29/04/2019
Purpose of research activity (including aims and objectives) Outline the purpose, aims and objectives of the research activity, including key research questions. Show briefly how existing research has informed the proposed activity and explain what the research activity will add and how it addresses an area of importance. (Maximum 300 words)			
The research project aims to explore the relationship that external influences, such as social media, has on a learner's overall wellbeing and therefore, their levels of attainment in school. The research aims to capture the views of our current generation of practitioners and students in order to contribute to an informed dissertation regarding the true effect that social media has on learners, and any potential benefits of incorporating social media into the classroom. The primary research that I wish to undertake will provide an insight into how it complements and affects children's learning within the classroom.			
(this box should expand as you type)			
Proposed methods Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. (Maximum 600 words)			
Interviews – a group of children from different classes will be involved in a semi-structured interview where they will be invited to respond to key questions.			

The children will be in an informal setting and I will make notes of their responses. The children will not be forced into participating and no direct individual questioning will take place if a child does not wish to respond. Exit: all children will be asked if they wish to take part. The children will use the traffic light fans and if at any point they wish to leave the interview or withdraw then they may do so. I will check on the children's feelings regularly. No names will be used in the writing. I will interview different teachers to see how they teach elements of internet safety and gain an insight into their opinions and experiences surrounding the effect that social media has on learning in general. Furthermore, I may interview other members of staff within the school that do not hold a teaching post. For example, the headteacher or classroom assistants. Exit: staff participation will be voluntarily and this notion will be expressed to staff participants from the outset. The staff will be informed that they can withdraw from the interview or not respond to a question at any time without providing notice.

Observation/Field notes – I will observe and make notes of a variety of teaching and learning encounters throughout my research. Throughout my observations, I will take note of the children's engagement and enjoyment. At times, I may focus on observing the whole class or individual children that are of interest to the research project. Or, during a session I may observe the teacher's approach to teaching and learning and their pedagogical approaches to certain situations. For example, if a child withdraws from a teacher and learning encounter. Observations will be made in my personal observation handbook. Once again, no names shall be mentioned however, a pseudonym may be used if necessary. To further enhance my research, I may discuss my notes with the teacher or children to gather a more detailed perspective or explanation for certain actions or attributes displayed.

Questionnaire – Depending on the children's responses throughout the research period I may create and administer a questionnaire if I believe that this will assist me to gather quality data. Throughout the creation of the questionnaire, I will adhere to and follow the training provided by the University during my second year of study when the design and distribution of a questionnaire was necessary for a specific module. The questionnaire may focus on qualitative or quantitative data, or both, depending on its focus. Furthermore, the questionnaire may be administered to learners, staff or both. If a questionnaire is necessary, then participants will not be required to list their name or personal information. However, they may be asked to share their status in the school (i.e. pupil or teacher) if the questionnaire is completed by both learners and staff and a participant's role is significant to the analysis.

A cover letter will accompany the questionnaire which will explain to the participant the reason for and nature of the research questionnaire. The questionnaire will be distributed via physical means only. Once participants have completed the questionnaire, their response will be gathered and placed within the response pool for analysis. For the questions posed within the questionnaire, there will be numerous ways for the individual to respond. This includes provided answers to questions to gather quantitative and qualitative data with the option, if necessary, for the individual to further comment their opinion or experience. Exit: before the participant submits the questionnaire, they have the right to retain their response. However, once I receive the participant's response and it is added to the pool, there will be no fair means of identifying their response in order to return it to them. This will be explained in the cover letter.

Learning walk – To support my research I may conduct a learning walk through the school to observe displays and discuss certain aspects of provision with members of staff or pupils. These learning walks may be self-directed or facilitated by a learner, group of learners or member of staff. Prior to the learning walk I will obtain consent from a member of staff. Exit: Prior to evidencing the walk (by means of written, photographic or audio methods) I will ask the participant who hosted the walk for their consent to use the information they provide in my research.

Video or audio taping – I will record certain teaching and learning encounters that I believe would contribute towards my research project. Video or audio taping will be used during group or individual interviews (with the interviewees prior permission) and later utilised to contribute towards my discussion and synthesis. Photographic evidence may also be collected. However, prior to this I will engage with the class teacher to enquire whether all children in the situation can be photographed. Following this information from the member of staff, I will act with caution when

utilising a camera and I will ensure those children, if any, who are not permitted to being photographed are not photographed. Recording of good practice or interviews with teachers and other members of staff may also be gathered to contribute towards the research project. Prior to recording any research participant, I will gain their permission initially and act in an ethical manner throughout.

Examples of pupils' work – Where I feel examples of pupils' work would support my research, I may request samples. Exit: Prior to gathering samples of work, I will ensure that I have the class teacher's consent and the consent of the people to which the work belongs. Upon gathering samples, I will take responsibility of the work and ensure that confidentiality and security is upheld.
(this box should expand as you type)

Location of research activity

Identify all locations where research activity will take place.

The proposed study/research activity will be conducted in a large comprehensive school and a partnership primary school (school details have yet to be released by faculty).

(this box should expand as you type)

Research activity outside of the UK

If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants.

N/A

(this box should expand as you type)

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

Will the research activity include:	YES	NO
Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☒	☐
Use of interviews?	☒	☐
Use of diaries?	☒	☐
Participant observation with their knowledge?	☒	☐
Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
Use of video or audio recording?	☒	☐
Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒
Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒

Other primary data collection methods, please explain in this box Learning walks	☒	☐
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If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

Who are the intended participants:	YES	NO
Students or staff at the University?	☒	☐
Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐
Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒
Children under 18?	☒	☐
Prisoners?	☐	☒
Young offenders?	☐	☒
Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒
Others (please identify):	☐	☒

Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited? The estimated number of participants will be 60 children aged between 8 and 16. However, this number may be subject to change. Additionally, head teachers, teachers, support staff and school staff will be invited to participate in the research. Prior to conducting the research, I will obtain consent from the head teacher or senior mentor in the school setting. (this box should expand as you type)
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Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☒	☐	☐
Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☒	☐	☐
Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☒	☐	☐
Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☒	☐	☐
If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☒	☐	☐
Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☒	☐	☐
With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☒	☐	☐

Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☒	☐	☐
Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☒	☐	☐
If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
(this box should expand as you type)			

Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
Will participants be paid?	☐	☒	☐
Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	☒	☐
Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☒	☐
Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☒	☐
If YES to any question, please provide full details			
(this box should expand as you type)			

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them.	
If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.	
Full risk assessment completed and appended?	
Yes	☐
No	☒
Risks to participants	
For example: emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information	
The risk to participants is that they be involved in the research without consent. Therefore, I will ensure that all consent procedures are in place by informing the children and staff of my research. I will explain to the children and staff that they have the right to withdraw and can leave the research, or express that they do not wish any data to be used, at any time. For example, I will ask the children if I can use their answers from the interviews in my research and share my notes. I will also monitor the children's wellbeing and stop any activity if any child is becoming upset/uncomfortable.	
(this box should expand as you type)	
If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	
N/A	
(this box should expand as you type)	

Risks to investigator For example: personal safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest The risk to the researcher is that I may be accused of unprofessional practice. I will manage the risk by adhering to the BERA guidelines and following my plan of ethical practice. (this box should expand as you type)
University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection There should be no risk to the University if I manage the risk to the participant and the researcher as detailed above. I will conduct the research and represent the results honestly. I will always comply with ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards as required by the statutory and regulatory authorities, as well as with the university's Research Integrity and Ethics Code of Practice. (this box should expand as you type)
Adverse outcomes List measures put in place to limit any adverse effects or outcomes of research activity where appropriate. Include any emergency protocols. I will manage the risk by adhering to the BERA guidelines and following my plan of ethical practice. I will always comply with ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards as required by the statutory and regulatory authorities, as well as with the university's Research Integrity and Ethics Code of Practice. Loss of data – upon collection of research I will assume full responsibility for the safekeeping of the data. To ensure the participant's response is safe it will be kept in a folder on my person until the research has been analysed and utilised at which time the data will be destroyed. In the event that a participant's response is lost at the fault of the author or a third-party then the individual will not be able to be identified as no personal details are listed on the questionnaire. (this box should expand as you type)

Disclosure and Barring Service			
If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	YES	NO	N/A
Has a DBS certificate been obtained?	☒	☐	☐

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

Feedback What feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when? I will not be providing feedback to participants as it is not relevant for the research. If the participants request feedback from the response then I, as the author, will provide a summary of the data collected. (this box should expand as you type)
Informed consent Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded. Participation consent – children

I will converse with my class teacher and senior mentor and inform them of the research I will be undertaking, providing reasons and rationale behind the research. However, I will verbally ask children identified to participate whether they wish to participate, e.g. use traffic light fans to support the children. If they show the green face, then I know they are happy to take part. If they show the red face, then I know they are not willing. This will be an individual exercise so that children are encouraged to respond honestly with their interest and wellbeing in mind. Children will also be informed that they can approach me at any time and discuss their contribution to the research project and explain whether they wish to participate.

Participation consent – teachers

For the class teachers, I will ask them to sign a document if they agree to take part in the research. If they are not willing to sign this document, then I shall not use them in my research. The consent form will include a box for the participant to check if they agree with the statements, e.g. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 11/02/19 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to restore any time, without giving any reason. I understand that any information given by me may be used in future report, articles or presentations by the research team. I understand that my name will not appear in any report, articles or presentations. I agree to participate in the above study.

(this box should expand as you type)

Confidentiality / Anonymity

Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.

I will ensure that no individual data (raw scores, individual identifiable performance outcomes) are made available to school/parents etc. Only non-identifiable summary/aggregate data can be provided in this way.

I will also place a statement on the consent form indicating that if you decide to remain anonymous maintaining your anonymity will be a priority and every practical precaution will be taken to disguise your identity/ If you prefer anonymity, there will not be any identifying information on audiotapes and transcripts without your prior consent. All materials generated from this or any interview will remain confidential.

(this box should expand as you type)

SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

In completing this section refer to the University's Research Data Management Policy and the extensive resources on the University's Research Data Management web pages (<http://uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/>).

	YES	NO
Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the Data Protection Act)? "personal data" means data which relate to a living individual who can be identified— (a) from those data, or (b) from those data and other information which is in the possession of, or is likely to come into the possession of, the data controller, and includes any expression of opinion about the individual and any indication of the intentions of the data controller or any other person in respect of the individual.	☐	☒
If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected: (this box should expand as you type)		
Does it involve sensitive personal data (as defined by the Data Protection Act)? "Sensitive personal data" means personal data consisting of information as to –	☐	☒

(a) the racial or ethnic origin of the data subject, (b) his political opinions, (c) his religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature, (d) whether he is a member of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992), (e) his physical or mental health or condition, (f) his sexual life, (g) the commission or alleged commission by him of any offence, or (h) any proceedings for any offence committed or alleged to have been committed by him, the disposal of such proceedings or the sentence of any court in such proceedings.		
If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
(this box should expand as you type)		
Will the research activity involve storing personal data on one of the following:	YES	NO
Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☒	☐
University computers?	☐	☒
Private company computers?	☐	☒
Home or other personal computers?	☒	☐
Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☒	☐
"Cloud" storage or websites?	☐	☒
Other – specify:	☐	☒
For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure data confidentiality, including details of password protection, encryption and anonymisation:		
Confidentiality will be upheld by not requesting participant names on any piece of data collected. Data will be stored in a locked cupboard and password protected computer. Any correspondence between my tutor and myself will be through a password protected email account.		
(this box should expand as you type)		
Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☐	☒
Sharing of data with others at the University?	☐	☒
Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
Export of data outside the European Union or importing of data from outside the UK?	☐	☒
Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☐	☒
Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
Use of data management system?	☐	☒
Data archiving?	☐	☒
If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the Data Protection Act (and/or any international equivalent):		
(this box should expand as you type)		

SECTION K: Declaration

List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:	
The researcher, supervisor and module co-ordinator.	
(this box should expand as you type)	
List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:	
The researcher, Chloe Ruth Mitchell.	
(this box should expand as you type)	
Give details of data storage arrangements, including where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.	
Participants that provide responses will have their data stored securely by the researcher. Once the data has been analysed by the researcher then it will be destroyed so that there is no physical trace of the data. This process will also be in accordance to the Data Protection Act (1998). The data collection period will range from the 11/02/2019 until the 29/04/2019. There will no longer be a use for the data and all data will be destroyed at this point in time.	
(this box should expand as you type)	
The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants.	
In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice	
Signature of applicant: C.R.Mitchell	Date: 08/02/19

For students:

Director of studies/supervisor:	Dr Sioned V Hughes
Signature:	<i>S.V.Hughes</i>
Date:	09/02/2019

For staff:

Supervisor:	
Signature:	
Date:	

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☒	I have completed ALL RELEVANT sections of the form in full.
☒	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☐	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (where appropriate)

☐	I have attached a full risk assessment (and have NOT completed Section H of this form) (where appropriate)
☒	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
☒	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Head of School.

RESEARCH STUDENTS AND STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

You will be informed of the outcome of your claim by email; therefore it is important that you check your University and personal email accounts regularly.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

This form is available electronically from the Academic Office web pages:

<http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/academic-office/>

Appendix 2: Example Questionnaire

A questionnaire to attain information on the effect that social media, information and communications technology (ICT) has on the well-being of learners.

How often do you check your social media/mobile phone/device?

Do you bring your mobile phone/device to school?

Yes No

Does your mobile phone/device distract you during class time?

Yes No

If yes to question 3, how?

How long could you feel comfortable without using your social media/mobile phone/device?

5-10 mins 20-30 mins 40-50 mins 1 hour+

Do you use your mobile phone throughout the night? (e.g. looking at the time, checking messages)

Yes No

How long before you go to sleep do you stop using your social media/mobile phone/device?

Do you use your mobile phone/device when a person is talking to you?

Never Sometimes Often

Do you prefer using a mobile phone/device/social media to communicate, rather than a physical conversation?

Never Sometimes Often

Do you feel that social media has an impact on your education?

Yes No

Please elaborate your answer.

Do you feel that social media has an impact on your well-being?

Yes No

Please elaborate your answer.

What social media platforms do you use? (please circle or tick all those that apply):

Facebook Twitter Snapchat Whatsapp Instagram Google Wikipedia Youtube Other

If other, please specify below.

Appendix 3: Elective Report



Electives Experience

11/02/2019 – 22/02/2019

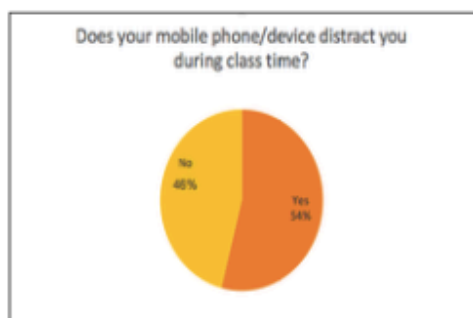
Research Question Title: What impact does social media, information and communications technology have on an individual's ability to learn?

Findings

Through the use of questionnaires, field notes, interviews and observations I was able to collect evidence to suggest that social media and the usage of ICT has an impact on learners' well-being.

Out of all of the participants that were asked to complete the questionnaires, 72% believed that social media does have an impact on their well-being, with many of them specifying that it is their self-esteem that it has an effect on. Some of the participants who believed that it does not have an impact on their well-being often stated that they feel secure within themselves and therefore, are not negatively impacted by it.

Furthermore, it has been interesting to gain an insight as to what policies and strategies the school uses to monitor and lessen the impact that mobile phones and social media have on learning. The school has blocked the use of certain websites such as Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram which has had a positive effect as children cannot access these social media platforms during lessons. This is especially important as the results of the questionnaires have indicated that a number of students feel that their phones distract them during lessons (please see figure 1).



Recommendation: Teachers use a box at the front of the class in which all learners must place their phones in at the start of a session, and retrieve at the end of the lesson in order to reduce the level of distractions and disruptions.

The school has a PLUSH policy that includes 'putting phones away' at the beginning of each session and this is well displayed throughout the school. There are many signs up that demonstrate the lack of tolerance of mobile phone usage during lesson times.

Figure 1

In a discussion with staff in the well-being center, it was explained that a couple of times a year the learners receive education on e-safety and the dangers that they may face online. However, it was discussed how the direct impact that social media has on a child's well-being is not widely taught during these sessions.

Recommendation: Possibly implementing more information on the effect that social media has on self-esteem and wellbeing more frequently where it is possible and appropriate.

Overall, the experience within the school has been extremely interesting and beneficial to the research project. All members of staff have been helpful and more than willing to help at any given moment. It has also been useful to experience elements of the school that I may not be able to experience again in other settings (e.g. visiting the Elfed unit).