

1. Introduction & Rationale

Using twitter for professional and academic purposes can encourage students and tutors to become 'connected educators' (Catapano 2017) and extend expert networks, increase social capital (Rehm et al 2015), whilst improving digital literacy necessary for the sector (Brodie 2011). With this in mind the #InTheNewsEDEY was introduced on twitter for students studying on all undergraduate Education and Early Childhood Studies (ECS) awards. This research will reflect on the impact of the hashtag for students studying the ECS part-time top-up between 6th February and 27th March. Kuh (2009) believes student engagement is the time and effort students invest in educational activities explicitly linked to their desired outcomes, thus this cohort have been chosen in particular as during this time frame, they were engaging in face to face debates related to #InTheNewsEDEY topics and signposts in preparation for an assessed debate.

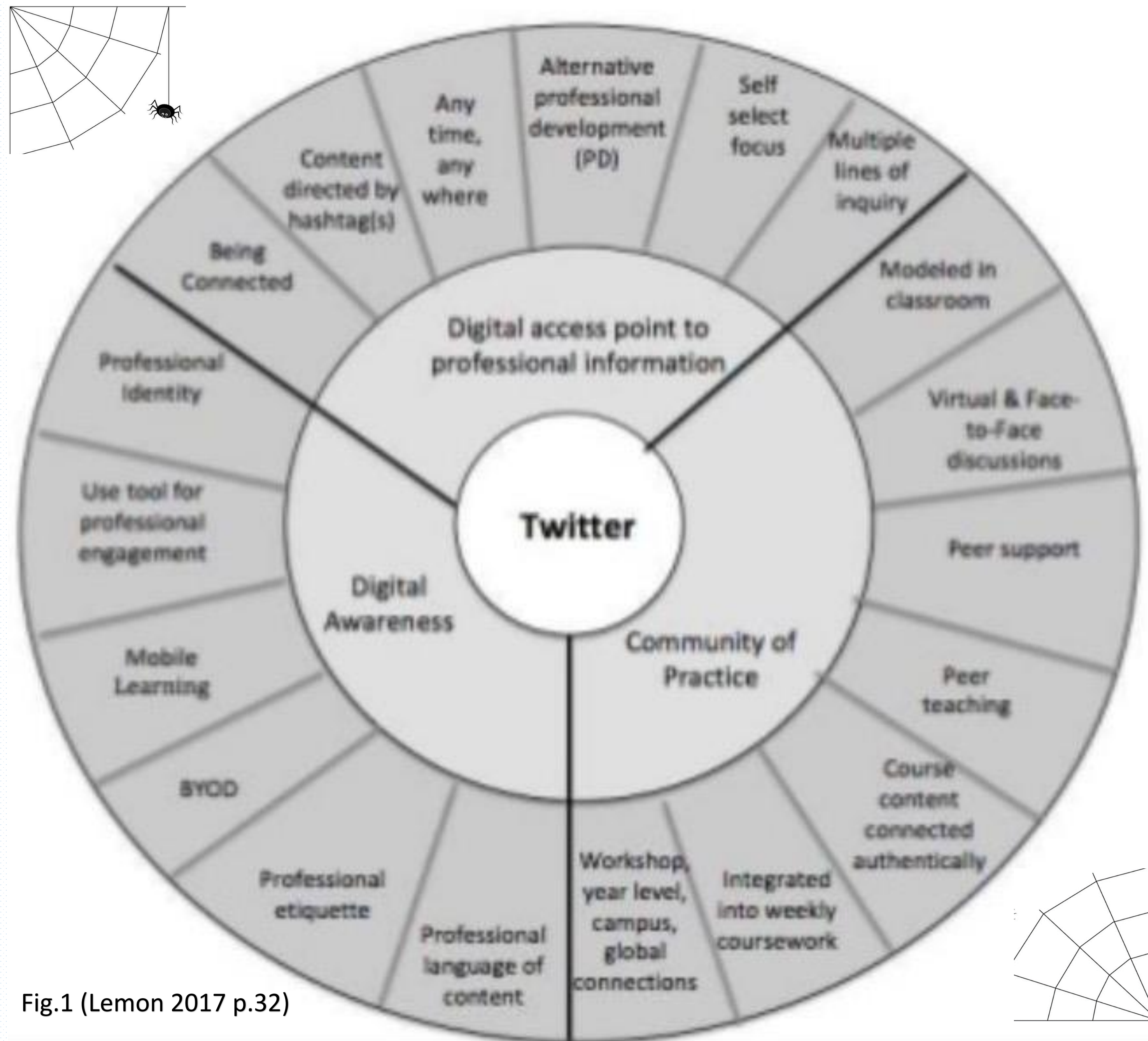


Fig.1 (Lemon 2017 p.32)

2. Important Literature

Ingold (2015) meshwork theory likens the spider web to social networks and helps us to visualise how our twitter communications connect us and can have impact. Lemon (2017) multiple investigations into twitter within education present benefits in fig.1. Shackelford et al (2012) attribute the success of twitter, to teachers having more social, educational and expert presence on the platform than the students themselves. This allows for students to feel a sense of belonging in an already established and useful virtual learning space. Johnson (2010) research found that tutors whom post entirely social or a mixture of social and scholarly content were perceived as more credible, than those who post solely scholarly material. Vigurs (2016) explored the use of twitter across 3 doctoral student groups, and highlighted that students appreciated the morale boost, networking opportunities, and enhanced belonging to the community group. Conversely, Vigurs (2016) uncovered limitations such as; the professional and personal investment twitter requires, thus leading students reconsidering its value and relevance to them personally. Further, tutor presence was a positive in terms of demonstrating how to use twitter effectively, whilst it not being imperative for tutors to be accessible on this format. However, Vigurs (2016) participants did not like tutors using twitter superficially or cynically.

#InTheNewsEDEY

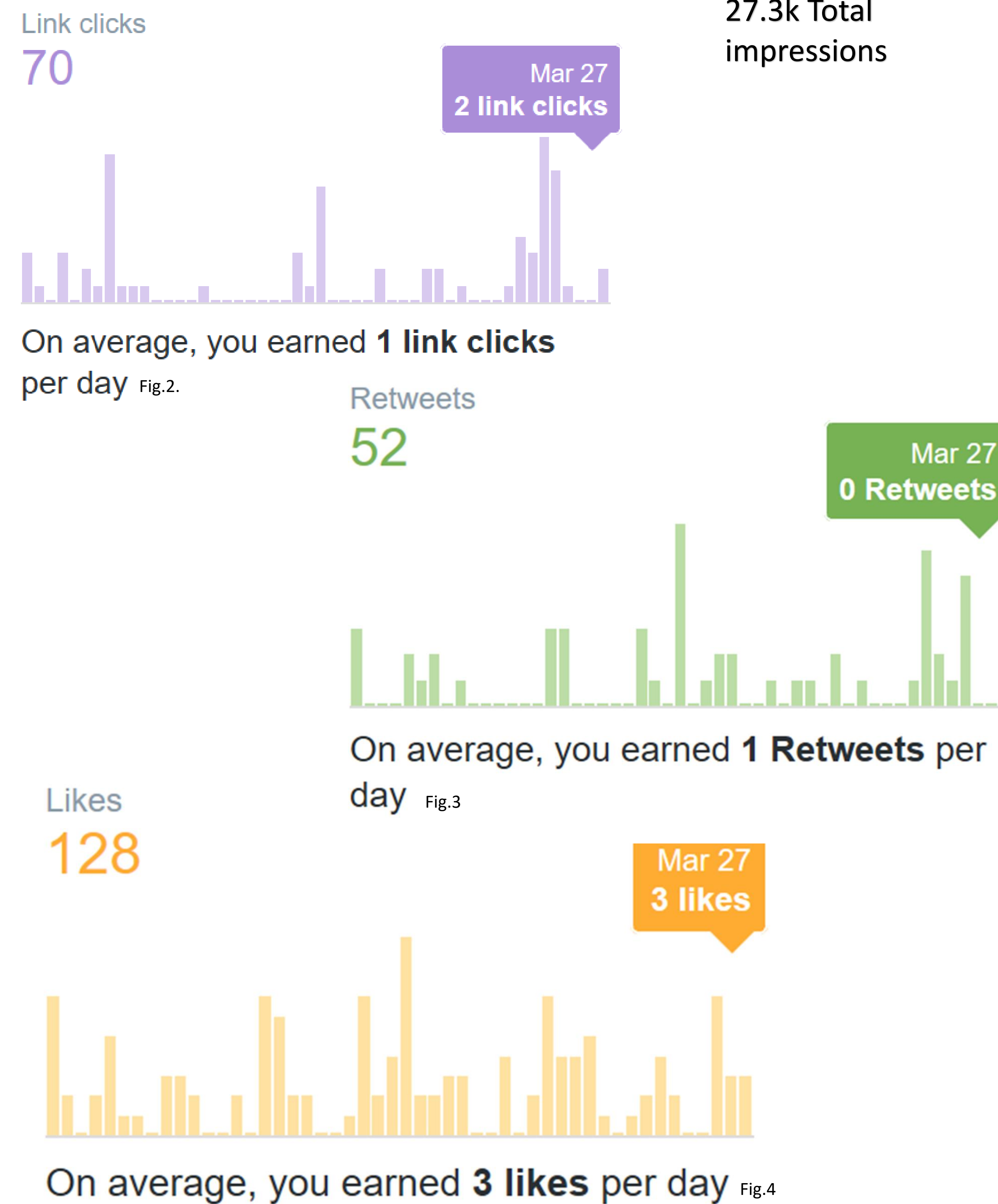


3. Methodology

Twitter analytics were viewed for tweets containing the #InTheNewsEDEY between 6th February and 27th March.

A voluntary focus group was held with each cohort to ascertain the benefits and limitations of #InTheNewsEDEY

4. Findings



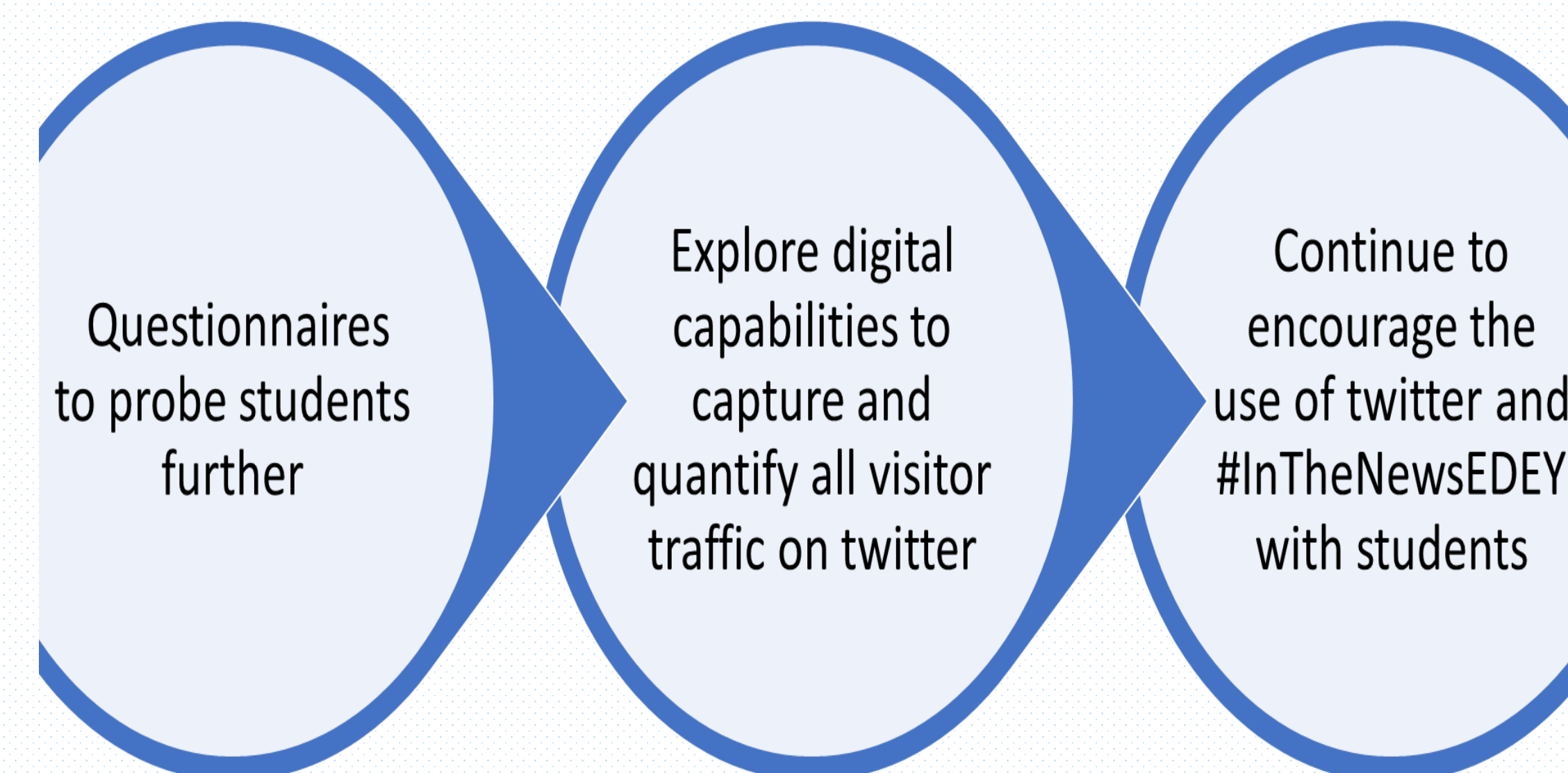
Pros	Cons
Wide audience	Context not always clear
Up to date news	Fear of 'going viral'
Professional and Practical opinions shared, not only academic	Face to face debates could last much longer (whilst it was appreciated time was a constraint)
Practice ideas	Don't know how to use it
Sharing peer knowledge	Algorithms are too fast on twitter
Observable changing attitudes	Not enough words
Signposts to publications & resources link to assessments & modules.	Prefer to search # or twitter account to view, rather than scrolling through lots of other content
Ignites passion	# culture is irritating

5. Discussion

Findings agree with Lemon (2017) and Vigurs (2016) whereby students value the scholarly signposts, which in turn increase their passion for the subject. Students also value Ingold (2015) networks and community. This concurs with Kuh (2009) as students perceive the platform as worthwhile to their attainment, and choose to engage with it. Link clicks in tweets increased towards the end of the time frame, potentially equating to an increase and confidence in use. Students enjoyed mixing the digital # with the face to face debate, and wished they had more time for this activity.

Similarly to Robertson (2017) cautions, students were wary of misinterpreted context, oversharing or 'going viral' thus did not tweet themselves, but preferred to read. So much so, students opted for searching the # or twitter accounts separately as they found the algorithms led them to potentially miss information, or have to trawl through irrelevant tweets. Twitter analytics therefore fail to uncover this and there will have been more link clicks than captured. Nevertheless 27.3k impressions is impressive, therefore supporting Rehm et al (2015) suggestion that expert and social capital can increase. Similarly to Vigurs (2016) and Johnson (2010) mature students dislike the # culture and felt that this undermined their professional credibility. Further, students also faced practical app use concerns. Lemon (2017) 3 themes in fig.1 certainly summarise accurately the aspects of twitter the primary findings would suggest students are largely aware of.

6. Recommendations



7. References