Web-Based Appreciation and Peer-Assessment for Visual-Art Education

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ABSTRACT

This study describes the application of a Web-based portfolio for appreciation and peer assessment for visual-art education in elementary school. Besides examining the effectiveness of the proposed system in enhancing visual art education, this study also addresses how Web-based portfolios can help teachers to assess student learning progress and facilitate peer assessment. The results of questionnaires and interviews shows that the proposed portfolio system can help student learning and the peer assessment component of the proposed portfolio system can help the students’ learning in visual-art education in elementary school.

Keywords: distance education; peer-assessment; portfolio

BACKGROUND

Compulsory education in Taiwan has been moving towards curriculum reform, in the form of so called Grade 1-9 Curriculum. The Grade 1-9 Curriculum has required primary and secondary school teachers to perform curriculum integration, curriculum evaluation, team teaching and instructional assessment since 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2001). The Grade 1-9 Curriculum requires students to apply computer skills to learning. Moreover, application of computer skills to curriculum integration and evaluation, team teaching and instructional assessment is important, but has been investigated little (Yang, 2001).

Educational assessment is the process of characterizing what students have learned and how well they have learned it (Greeno, 1996). Conventional paper-and-pencil tests and teacher-made classroom tests are inaccurate methods of assessing student progress in visual-art education. Thus, portfolio assessment is an important alternative assessment that follows the constructive theory to support meaningful
learning. The educational portfolio concept stems from the notion of the artist portfolio. A portfolio is intended to systematically collect and organize student artifacts that demonstrate achievement or improvement (Chiseri-Strater, 1992). Portfolios help teachers assess the development of students over time, and also let students assess their peers. A classical portfolio is typically comprised of papers, homework assignments, self-reflection pieces and peer-assessment (Murphy, 1990). Portfolio assessments are used in elementary and secondary schools (Panitz, 1996). Recently, portfolio assessments also have been adopted in universities for assessment and instruction. In the current educational environment of combining educational technologies with increasingly advanced information technologies, methods of supporting portfolio assessment, such as the use of electronic portfolios, are becoming increasingly attractive. Materials in noncomputerized portfolios must be stored in notebooks and folders in file drawers, boxes and other large containers (Barrett, 2000). However, these storage methods mean that materials are easily lost or destroyed. In electronic portfolios, artifacts can be digitized into computer-readable formats using scanners, digital cameras and personal computers. Electronic portfolios are portable, accessible and more easily and widely distributed (Barrett, 2000). But electronic portfolios have certain disadvantages, one of which is that teachers and students must spend more time creating them. Additionally, some students do not accept the new form of assessment. However, electronic portfolios have certain advantages. First, such portfolios can reflect the change and growth of students. Second, such portfolios provide a convenient method of presenting a showcase work. Third, materials in portfolios can be conserved.

Electronic portfolios have recently been constructed on a World Wide Web server to provide online functions. Usually, Web-based electronic portfolios are used in college and university education because the students must be skilled in using computers. However, little attention has been paid to the use of Web-based electronic portfolios in elementary school because the students in elementary schools usually have no computer skills. Hence, the design goal of the Web-based electronic portfolio is very simple so as to be user-friendly. Restated, the system is designed to help students construct their electronic portfolio easily. The portfolio can improve teaching and learning in elementary school visual-art education.

The visual-art instructions mainly focus on the medium material and skill methods in the past. And the adopted assessment methods are also the teacher’s subjective to the evaluation of the skill, creativity and performance of the students. Hence, the evaluation of the students’ ability to appreciate beauty and life and to put their appreciation into practice is lacking. At most, assessments only provide the score and the teacher’s report, but cannot show the meaning of student learning. So, the assessment is not used for learning and teaching improvement. Peer assessment is an active learning process based on Distributed Constructionism, a theory of learning and a strategy for education (Resnick, 1996). By Constructionism, people actively construct knowledge from their experiences in the world. Then, distributed construction activities include three different ways: discussing constructions, sharing constructions and collaborating on constructions. These three activities mentioned above can help people construct knowledge from other people by using web technology. Therefore, the web-based peer assessment mechanism used in the vision-art instruction can improve the students’ ability in appreciation of art.

Furthermore, digital image technology is not only the communication of the picture that imitates the true function, but also the manager of the learner (Wang, 2000). So the mode of peer assessment is digitalized into visual-art instructions. Through the effective design, the instruction is free from the limit of time and space, network teaching, immediate feedback, interactive learning and multimedia learning. It will concretely improve the students’ learning of visual-art education.
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