Chapter XIII

Utilizing Web Tools for Computer-Mediated Communication to Enhance Team-Based Learning

Elizabeth Avery Gomez
New Jersey Institute of Technology, USA

Dezhi Wu
Southern Utah University, USA

Katia Passerini
New Jersey Institute of Technology, USA

Michael Bieber
New Jersey Institute of Technology, USA

ABSTRACT

Team-based learning is an active learning instructional strategy used in the traditional face-to-face classroom. Web-based computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools complement the face-to-face classroom and enable active learning between face-to-face class times. This paper presents the results from pilot assessments of computer-supported team-based learning. The authors utilized pedagogical approaches grounded in collaborative learning techniques, such as team-based learning, and extended these techniques to a web-based environment through the use of computer-mediated communications tools (discussion web-boards). This approach was examined through field studies in the course of two
INTRODUCTION

Instructors of both traditional face-to-face and online classrooms seek active learning techniques that engage the learners. The increased use of Web-based computer-mediated communications (CMC) as support tools that supplement the face-to-face classroom (“blended learning”) and enable active learning between face-to-face class times fit this quest. CMC is regarded as an efficient computer support tool to facilitate student participation (Phillips & Santoro, 1989). Prior research (Wu & Hiltz, 2004) reports that adding asynchronous online discussions through CMC platforms enhances students’ learning quality in a face-to-face class setting. Although various Web-based computer-mediated communications learning strategies have been applied in the field (e.g., online collaborative learning), limited research focuses on computer-supported team-based learning in a face-to-face classroom. Team-based learning (TBL) is an instructional strategy that promotes active learning in small groups that form a team over time (Michaelsen, Fink, & Knight, 2002).

Our goal is to assess the impact of team-based learning when introduced in a face-to-face classroom that utilizes Web-based CMC as a supplemental learning tool between classes, thus increasing team interaction across the semester. A Web-based computer-mediated communications tool called WebBoard™ was utilized in our computer-supported team-based learning research to facilitate team learning activities and communication. This paper describes results from this experience. The paper begins with a literature review building on constructivist learning, collaborative learning, small group learning, and Bloom’s taxonomy theories. It then provides examples of the Web-based interface and pedagogical implementation, introducing a model for assessing computer-supported team-based learning. Research questions, hypotheses, and data analysis results are presented. Finally, the limitations of the study and future research efforts are discussed.

We believe that our contribution is two-fold. First, we describe an approach for transferring a grounded pedagogical approach to a Web-based environment by supplementing the experiences from a face-to-face classroom. Second, we document preliminary assessment results that support the feasibility and effectiveness of the proposed approach. This discussion should be of interest to educators and researchers in expanding the use of current Web-based learning management systems with a structured modular approach through the integrated use of discussion forums to achieve higher-order team learning outcomes.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Constructivist Learning Theory

Leidner and Jarvenpaa (1995) classify learning models and discuss their relevance and impact in information systems educational approaches.
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