Framework for Developing and Assessing Business Education Wikis

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ABSTRACT

The use of Web 2.0 tools is becoming widespread in business education and educators are increasingly exploring the use of Blogs, Wikis, and Podcasts in their courses. For teaching and learning to be effective in new technology-based environments, there is a need to research and design Web 2.0 learning systems that are effective platforms for incorporating interactive tools to engage students in learning. Although Web 2.0 assignments are usually tailored to meet specific learning objectives of courses and instructions can be made available to students to address the technical nature of the environment, development and assessment of Web 2.0 assignments remains a challenge for most business educators. Using the context of wikis, this article proposes a framework for development and assessment of business education wikis to assist educators who want to explore the use of wikis in their courses.

Keywords: Instructional Rubric, Network Pedagogy, Social Computing, Teaching Assessment, Teamwork, Web 2.0, Wiki Technology

INTRODUCTION

Web 2.0 has attracted a lot of interest from educators, practitioners, and researchers because it takes into account human social dynamics and use of communication technology to facilitate exchange of information by using common platforms such as Blogs or Wikis. Seeking a more descriptive label for Web 2.0, some have referred to it as “social computing”, “social web” or “live web”, but regardless of the wording, there is a general sense among educators, technologists, and sociologists that tremendous societal shifts are underway due to rapid advances in Internet technology (Casarez, Cripe, & Weckerle, 2009). In response to calls for business schools to update their curricula and teaching methods (Campbell, Heriot, & Finney, 2006), business educators are starting to combine technical advances with research on instructional pedagogy to create and deliver interactive learning that uses collaboration, interaction, and rich media as integral features of course content.

Although Web 2.0 services such as MySpace, FaceBook YouTube, and Flickr are being used in business education, research has
lagged practice in use of these tools for learning. Baird and Fisher (2005) stated, “Social networking media engages the user in the content and allows them to be included as an active participant as they construct a learning landscape rooted in social interaction, knowledge exchange, and optimum cognitive development with their peers” (p. 24). For teaching and learning to be effective in new technology environments, there is a need to research and design Web 2.0 learning systems that are effective platforms for incorporating interactive tools to engage students in learning. Today’s business students are seeking web environments that are customizable to their learning styles and needs (Roberts, 2005).

Web 2.0 technology holds good potential for enhancing business education. The use of Web 2.0 tools is increasing in business courses as educators become more familiar with the benefits of using these tools for teaching and learning. For example, the use of participatory web applications like Instant Messaging (Yammer), Podcasting tools (Gabcast and Yodio), survey tools (Google Docs), and collaboration tools (Wikispaces) can make learning interactive and meaningful. These applications allow students to engage with learning in ways that make them producers of information instead of passive recipients. Web 2.0 technology tools can also help facilitate learning by creating opportunities for students to communicate and collaborate outside the boundaries of a physical classroom. A wiki is an example of Web 2.0 application where users can build, edit, and develop documents based on collaborative decision making. Although wikis are available from several vendors, some features such as discussion board, history & version tracking, and formatting tools are included as part of almost all wiki spaces. It is this aspect of wiki technology that can be appealing to educators because they are able to support students groups as they build knowledge, maintain interest, excitement, and dedication to learning. Researchers have reported that Web 2.0 tools have made it possible for learners to transcend distance by using collaborative tools that are now available on devices that today’s learners consider integral to their lives (Lomas, Burke, & Page, 2008; Aspden & Thorpe, 2009).

Although most business educators are familiar with concepts of assessment, teamwork, collaboration, and group processes, there is paucity of research literature focusing on application of these concepts to teaching and learning in technology and Web 2.0 learning environments. Based on integration of review of literature of above mentioned concepts along with the experience of authors in using educational wikis in business courses, a framework is presented that can assist educators and researchers develop pedagogically sound wiki assignments that have a structured assessment foundation for evaluation of teaching and learning experiences to meet educational outcomes. Application of the framework is explained by using a case study wiki assignment that was used by the authors in their courses.

ASSESSMENT CHALLENGES

Assessments are a vital component of the educational process. One of the most common uses of assessments is to assign student grades. While this is an important task for educators, it is often complicated by other factors such as individual, peer, and group assessment. In general, any course assessment should allow educators to determine and gauge the success of student learning and understanding. Technology-based instruction has additional challenges associated with course assessments. Liang and Creasy (2004) stated that the most significant challenge of online assessments is the absence of the instructor during the assessment. Olt (2002) recommended that alternate assessments must be created in learning environments where students are required to demonstrate higher order thinking skills.

Liu (2006) stated that student motivation and attitudes towards learning are increased in an environment that is enhanced through the use of technology (such as wikis). Thomas (2000) called for a new theory of learning and instruc-
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