
Mediating collaboration using wiki's and blogs in sport studies at a South African Higher Education Institution

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Synopsis:

Abstract:

Technological applications such as the use of Web 2.0, wikis and blogs have the potential to transform the learning experience of students worldwide (Hazari et al, 2009; Siemans & Tittenberger 2009). Web 2.0 tools such as wiki's is an online authoring tool that is developed collaboratively by a community of users to publish new content or edit existing content (Hutchison & Colwell, 2012; Jobling & Moni 2004). Blogs, also Web 2.0 tools, are web sharing information technologies that often function as an online journal, but may be used for knowledge sharing or reflection (Boulos et al, 2006). These tools have become popular because of their wide scope for interactivity (Williams & Jacobs 2004). It is therefore particularly appealing because of its provision of instant, any time and any place access to a dynamic and ever building digital repository of user-specified knowledge (Wheeler et al, 2008). As an emerging technology in South African education, blogs can be valuable reflective tools in which students share or provide information about their experiences. These tools facilitate student collaboration and interaction in much the same way as authentic learning tasks mediate specific educational outcomes (Herrington 2006). Therefore, wiki's and blogs provide a valuable space for students to engage in reflective practices whilst learning is supported by emerging technologies. Reflective practices are therefore seen as a learning strategy whereby professionals become aware of their implicit knowledge base (Herrington et al, 2010; Schön 1983). These educational technology tools has the potential to provide students who are located in resource poor institutions, the much needed digital literary skills required for the 21st century workplace. Hence, the pedagogical value of wiki's and blogs is worth further scrutiny. For the purpose of this study, a wiki task was designed to include the nine elements of authentic learning in order to improve collaboration and interaction within the virtual classroom. A blog was developed to document students'

reflective experiences of using educational technologies in the classroom. Reflective practices in education have in many ways shown to have value and therefore blog posts were used to allow students to reflect on their learning experiences as well as a discussion forum within a blended learning environment. Therefore the aim of this exploratory study was to investigate how emerging technologies mediate authentic learning in sport science education. Participants for this study were conveniently selected from a group of students (N=88) in their second year of study towards a sport science degree which is located within a health sciences discipline. This paper drew on the students' reflective experiences after an authentic wiki-based task where a total of 67 reflective blog post summaries were analysed using a qualitative methodological approach. A thematic content analysis was conducted on the written blog reflections using the nine elements of authentic learning as an analytical framework. Furthermore, the data was analysed through the lens of Engeström's third generation activity theory in order to determine how the technology tools mediated collaboration and interaction in the classroom. This paper proposes that the use of open access technologies such as wiki's has the potential to mediate collaboration and interaction in a meaningful way. This paper concludes that educational technology tools transformed students' learning experiences from being passive recipients of information to active participants of learning.

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