WEBLOGS: A KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT TOOL FOR LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

The use of Weblogs as a Pedagogical Tool affords an opportunity to transfer the ownership of learning to students integrate teaching and learning practices, participation in discussions, provide links to timely articles and podcasts and to invite experts into the conversation, all to create environment where students not only experience the subject matter but also learn how to final credible sources for learning in the future. Thus, a familiarity with how blogs can be used would benefit the students beyond the classroom experience.

Key words: Weblog, Pedagogical Tool

INTRODUCTION

Today's world is highly driven by technology. All organizations in various sectors: business, education, healthcare, banking and finance and other are influenced by the rapid pace of technological developments and innovations. The education sector, where studens centric learning is the core aspect to take into consideration, is highly influenced by technology. In fact, technology made it necessary for certain transformations, to take place for the benefits promised by technology to be realized (Garrison & Kunuka, 2004). This technology effect presented itself in various forms ranging form using instructional technologies inside the classroom to running the whole course away from classroom boundaries, thus offering students with the chance of having access to higher education regardless of place, time and constraint.

A major teaching challenge present in today's classroom is helping our students acquire both explicit and tacit knowledge. Moreover, teaching changes both the ways in which we learn and ways in which we conceive of the learning process. We have grown increasingly aware that learning facts is not enough. Knowledge management in increasingly is leading us to question our focus on explicit knowledge, gained from textbooks and our relative neglect of tacit knowledge, gained from experience. Tacit knowledge consists of Knowing to get things done, wisdom acquired though years of practice (Morrison & Oblinger. 2002)

As faculty, we are experiences in presenting explicit knowledge on a particular subject. However, organization want employees who are able to integrate both explicit and knowledge in the work place (Asllanim & Somasunder, 2008). By using the internet as resource, we have "opportunities for treating teaching and learning as truly social activities where knowledge is built though interaction and dialogue rather lecture and recitation" (Deitering & Huston, 2004). The students can learn from us, each other and virtual experts online. In addition, technology accommodates diverse styles of learning and allows students to be more active in growing their own new knowledge (Watkins, 2005). It is in this context, the one type of technology weblogs commonly known us blogs, help our students gan explicit and tacit knowledge and are effective and efficient for both students and faculty.

FOCUS FOR THE CLASS BLOG

Before introducing a class blog to our students, we had to determine the focus it should take to help in achieving our learning objectives. This depend upon the course being taught, teaching philosophies and comfort level we each had with giving up some control in our classrooms. The blogs used depends on three possible approaches.

(a) Instructor focused Blogs

1. Featuring one-way communication from faculty to students.
2. Instructor posts syllabi, assignments and link to articles and websites for students to read.

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3. Faculty retain ownership and students are expected to access the blog on regular basis.
4. Blog allows teacher to be more efficient.
5. Blog is also a good way to hyperlink to visual aids used in class.
6. Instructor focused blog may be the best approach for classes that don't involve a lot of discussion.

Learner-Focused Blogs
1. Uses two-way communication between faculty and students.
2. Instructor expect the students to be more active participants in the blog.
3. Learning can accur peer-to-peer in addition to teacher-to-student.
4. Students write their own posts or comment on what they had been learning in class.
5. Students creates the blog and instructor is the commenter.
6. Student are given more control over their learning experience.

Community-Focused Blogs
1. Interactive community focused teaching tool between and among student and instructor.
2. Involves others identified as experts to crate a virtual learning environment.
3. Encourages students to make a connection between classroom and the teal world.
4. Students can develop questions related to course topics.
5. Students can contact others outside of class who participate as "guest teachrer".

WAYS TO USE WEBLOGS IN EDUCATION (DAVIS, 2004)
You might like to create reflective, journal type blog to ………..
1. Reflect on your teaching experiences
2. Keep a log of teacher-training experiences.
3. Write a description of a specific teaching unit.
4. Describe what worked for you in the classroom or what didn't work.
5. Provide some teaching tips for other teachers.
6. Explain teaching insights you gain form what happens in your classes.

7. Provide some how to s on using specific technology in the class, describing how you used this technology in your own class.

You might like to start a class blog to………
1. Post assignments based on literature readings and have students respond on their own weblog, creating a kind of portofolio of their work.
2. Post prompts for writing.
3. Provide examples of class work, vocabulary activities, or grammar games.
4. Provide online reading for students to read and react to.
5. Invite student comments or postings on issues in order to give them a writing voice.
6. Publish examples of good student writing done in class.
7. Create a dynamic teaching site, posting not only class-related information, but also activities, discussion topics, links to additional information about topics they are studying in class, and reading to inspire learning.
8. Create a literature circle.
9. Create an online book club.
10. Post tasks to carry our project-based learning tasks with students.
11. Build a class newsletter, using student-writing articles and photos they take.
12. Link your class with anther class somewhere else in the world.

You can encourage students (either on your weblog using to comments on feature or on their own wedlogs) to blog………….
1. Their reactions to thought-provoking questions.
2. Their reactions to photos you post.
3. Journal entries
4. Results of surveys they carry out as part of a class unit.
5. Their ideas opinions about topics discussed in class.

You can have your students create their own weblog to ………..

1. Learn how to blog
2. Complete class writing assignments.
3. Express their opinions on topics you are studying in class.
4. Discuss activities they did in class and tell what they think about them(You, the teacher, can learn a lot this way!)
5. Write about class topics, using newly-learned vocabulary words and idioms.

You can also ask your class to create a shared weblog ………

1. Complete project work in small groups, assigning each group a different task.
2. Showcase products of project based learning.
3. Complete a Web Quest.

EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS FROM CLASS BLOGS

1. Blogging invites more students into the conversation and writing their thourgh and responding thoughts of others in blog/comment format.
2. Blogging allows students to participate in mini-conversations via blogs keeps the classroom conversation alive even when students are not physically present.
3. Classroom blogging provides a safe mechanism for introducing students to social media.
4. Blogging makes the students into subject matter experts.
5. Blogging helps students take ownership of their learning.

CONCLUSION

Our experience in using classroom blogs have been overwherlmingly positive. While students acceptance of technology in the classroom requires its perceived usefulness and ease of use, students do tend to learn best when they need information that they can put to use immediately. Blogs are an affective and efficient method of allowing students to access information as it is needed and to make connections see how others can are using the knowledge so they can access and evaluate information and construct new learning paradigms for themselves. Finally, effectively modeling ways to use blogs as teaching and learning tool is a useful skill for our students to have as they embark on their journey of life long learning .

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