
Editorial

Qiyun Wang

Learning Sciences and Technologies Academic Group,
National Institute of Education,
Nanyang Technological University,
1 Nanyang Walk, 637616, Singapore
E-mail: qiyun.wang@nie.edu.sg

Biographical notes: Qiyun Wang is an Associate Professor in the Academic Group of Learning Science and Technologies at National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. His research interests include social media for teaching and learning, online learning, Web 2.0 tools, web-based learning environment design, and interactive learning.

Included in this issue are six articles about using social media for collaborative learning. Social media tools by nature are for socialisation and communication. However, they have great potential for teaching and learning in particular for collaborative learning, as students are virtually connected with one another on a social platform. They can easily share information, discuss ideas, and hence construct knowledge.

In the first article written by Carpenter, the author describes and analyses the semester-long use of Twitter as part of an undergraduate teacher education course at a private university in the USA. The results showed that Twitter facilitated conversation, connectedness, and resource sharing that were collaborative, but did not include other facets of collaboration such as co-construction of knowledge. Participants' use of Twitter varied widely, with some students interacting little and satisfying only minimum requirements while others surpassed these requirements. This article also reminds that microblogging on its own did not miraculously produce copious and deep collaboration. Social media such as Twitter can create possibilities for collaborative learning, and those possibilities appear more likely to materialise when educators' effectively design and support students' experiences with these tools.

The learning potential of video games has received considerable academic attention in recent years. To play video games, players must comprehend the complexity, and develop an understanding of the in-game systems. The article written by Barr examines how players work together to learn from one another about the systems found in their favourite games and how they engaged with social media – wikis, in particular – to facilitate collaborative learning. This study suggests that there is tremendous potential for educators to engage with their students via social media tools such as wikis, under suitable circumstances.

Interaction is a crucial prerequisite for successful learning with Web 2.0. In the article written by Ganster, Sträfling, Grundnig, and Krämer, the authors compare the content of interaction between learners for two runs of the same course where learners collaborated via Web 2.0 tools. The results show that it is not so much the presence of interaction that determines satisfaction but particularly the quality and specific dynamics, including the

tone of interaction, the climate, off-topic discussion and social feedback that may play a crucial role and need to be investigated further in future studies.

Tackett and Torres used a mixed-method approach to analyse the interaction patterns and quality of discussion among distance-learning students who used two different course tools – VoiceThread™ (VT) and discussion board (DB) – to complete assignments during their enrolment at a large, public institution of higher education. They found that six patterns of discussion emerged from the posts: agreement, disagreement, countering, belief, statement, and re-state. The student posts from the VT assignments had higher quality scores and higher frequency of countering and belief statements. Whereas, the student posts from DB assignments had lower quality scores and a higher frequency of re-statement and agree statements.

Students are often distracted and disengaged in the classroom. Rather than banning social media from the classroom, instructors can implement its use as an active learning tool to increase engagement related to the course content in learning communities of peers, experts and organisations. The article written by Attaran, Boyer and Mitchell provides an example of how to use social media in a sustainability marketing university course offering and explores how social media impacts attitudes, behaviours, and knowledge related to course content. The authors found sustainability knowledge and behaviours significantly increased after social media was implemented in the course offering. In addition, students' attitudes toward practicing sustainability, reducing consumption, and being ecofriendly significantly increased.

Communication and language interactions are co-constructed, context-related and in continuous flux and change. In the study conducted by Bortoluzzi and Marenzi, a group of school teachers, trainers, and trainees used a peer-learning online community to share materials and reflect on their practice. The online community is supported by the LearnWeb2.0 social platform. The paper presents an overview of the ongoing project and reports how a small but representative group of trainee teachers perceived their participation in the e-community.

These articles are contributed by professors, lecturers and PhD students from different countries: three articles from USA, one from UK, one from Germany, and another one from Italy. The articles display various ways of using social media tools in different settings, and their findings have implications for effectively using ICT in other contexts.