
Editorial

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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.

This issue includes six articles from five countries (the USA, Netherlands, Spain, Singapore, and China). Five articles are about empirical studies exploring the use of various social media tools such as Cramster, Pinterest, wiki, and weblog for learning; and the other one is a review of the literature on blended learning.

In the first article, van de Sande analyses the posts on the open online help forum Cramster to examine the accuracy of the solutions students received and also their perception of the solutions' helpfulness. The results show that students generally receive worked solutions as opposed to final answers, and that many of these worked solutions provide steps to follow. Some of the solutions even resemble informal versions of worked examples found in textbooks and other instructional materials. On the other hand, however, many of the solutions published on Cramster also contain errors. Based on the students' own ratings, it appears that students do not discern these errors and may simply appreciate the fact that they have received. This can be a potential problem for the students who often use social online help forum to get support from others.

The second article written by Delello and McWhorter is about using the visual social networking tool Pinterest. Pinterest is a new social networking tool allowing users to visually share and discover new interests by pinning images to an online pin board. This article explores the students' attitudes towards the use of Pinterest as a tool for learning and also how they have developed a virtual community of practice by using Pinterest. The result shows that Pinterest has great potential for learning and also for creating a virtual community of practice. However, some barriers such as time constraints and distractibility are also surfaced in this study.

The paper written by Lacasa, Martinez-Borda, and Cortes explores what happens in a primary education classroom where digital objects such as video games and blogs coexist with more traditional objects such as notebooks. The result shows that the number of references to notebooks, the internet and video games made by participants throughout the school year differs depending on the role they play in the workshop. The teacher refers often to the notebook, and the children to video games. Mediated by evocative objects the children, the teacher and the researchers create several innovative scenarios in

which specific abilities emerge in relation to particular video games. Also, evocative objects are mediators in the collaborative situations arising in the classroom.

Wiki is a sample of Web 2.0 tools. It allows users to easily create and edit web pages. It can also be used as a collaborative learning space for learners to share information and discuss ideas. The challenge of using wiki to create a learning environment is how to design an engaging wiki page. In the article written by Kang, the eyetracking technology was used to monitor students' eye movement when they are using wiki pages. Based on the data generated from the eye tracking instrument, the paper presents three wiki design principles which are useful for guiding the design of web pages for learning.

Weblog is often used as a tool for writing reflections or sharing information with others. It also has the potential to support group collaboration. In the study conducted by Tong, a collaborative learning environment is created by using the weblog to support a class of students in China. Results show that the collaborative learning environment strengthens the ability of teachers and also enhances students' independent learning. This study reveals that group members manage to complete learning tasks and achieve goals through information sharing and brainstorming together as a group.

Blended learning as a combination of face-to-face learning and online learning is often considered as an optimal choice for it has the potential to supplement with each other and overcome the limitations of face-to-face or online learning alone (Means et al., 2010). Nevertheless, blended learning has challenges and limitations as well. In the article written by Chan and Quek, they review a number of recent articles about blended learning and summarise a list of key benefits and challenges of blended learning, and also identify some common strategies in implementing blended learning in tertiary institutes.

References

- Means, B., Toyama, Y., Murphy, R., Bakia, M. and Jones, K. (2010) 'Evaluation of evidence-based practices in online learning: a meta-analysis and review of online learning', Center for Technology in Learning, US Department of Education [online] <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oepd/ppss/reports.html> (accessed 10 May 2014).