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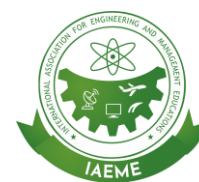
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‘WIKI’ – A TECHNOLOGY TOOL FOR LEARNING AND REFLECTION

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the transformative potential of wikis and blogs as reflective and collaborative tools in educational settings, particularly in the professional development of teachers and the reflective learning of students. Traditionally, reflection involved individual activities such as teaching diaries or student feedback forms; however, the advent of Web 2.0 technologies like blogs and wikis has introduced new dimensions of interaction, collaboration, and transparency in the teaching-learning process. The study discusses the distinctions between blogs and wikis, emphasizing the collaborative and dynamic nature of wikis, and their application in documenting experiences, promoting reflective thinking, and fostering knowledge creation. Real-world applications, such as those at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, are highlighted to illustrate their effectiveness. The paper also reviews prior research and identifies wikis as valuable tools for both personal reflection and professional development, while also noting their potential for use in policy formation and institutional improvement. The conclusion emphasizes the need for further exploration into the integration of AI technologies with wikis to enhance their pedagogical utility.

Keywords: Wiki, Blog, Reflective Practice, Collaborative Learning, Teacher Professional Development, Web 2.0 Tools, Educational Technology, Knowledge Construction, Out-of-Distribution Reflection, Student Engagement, AI in Education.

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1. Introduction

Traditionally, reflective practices of teachers included writing a teaching diary which contains broad steps in the teaching and whether aims and objectives have been achieved. Teachers also collected feedback forms from students at the end of the course to ascertain the views of students towards their teaching. These practices have begun to be replaced blogs and wikis owing to the easy access of these technological tools. Their innovative nature and varied possibilities have attracted both teachers and students. The teaching-learning process can benefit a great deal if these tools are harnessed by both teachers and students. Researcher Helen Chen (2005) reports that they have begun to use blogs or wikis to support their students’ reflections. David Tosh and Ben Wermuller of the University of Edinburgh have published a paper online entitled, “ePortfolios and weblogs: one vision for ePortfolio development” (2004).

Blogging has also been used creatively by some researchers in Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It has become an integral part of the lives of their students, so much so that the university has started hiring their own students to blog on the university admissions web page in order to attract prospective students. These blogs and comments by students are unedited and describe campus life from the bloggers’ point of view. What makes them so popular is that they are multi-purpose in nature and easy to set up. They are used as personal diaries, reflective journals and to report the progress at workplace and write summaries of current events (Tosh & Wermuller, pp. 3-4). A wiki is very much suited for reflective activity because it takes place in an environment that invites collaboration. A wiki can be used in many of the same ways as a blog, but is better suited for use by a group for collaborative projects.

The paper looks at how wikis be used for reflection both by teachers and students, how wikis serve as an effective Professional Development activity and how wikis be put to creative and profitable use. It is anticipated that both blogs and wikis are changing the dynamics of

student-teacher relation by making available the views and opinions of teachers and students to one another. The act of reflection assumes significance and becomes collaborative with blogs and wikis. They help the teachers in developing professionally if proper lessons are drawn by them from their experience of blogging. They can be put to creative and profitable use as in the case of Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

2. Meaning of ‘Wiki’

The term ‘Wiki’ comes from the Hawaiian language where ‘Wiki-Wiki’ means ‘hurry up’ Wiki is a simple web page. A wiki is a group of web pages that allows users to add content, similar to a discussion forum or blog, but also permits others (sometimes completely unrestrictedly) to edit the content (Arreguin, 2004). It can be edited by people and can be worked upon. So, it is a collaborative document or a group website which can be created by any group of people such as fans of a particular sport, members of a family, classmates in a classroom, members of a particular community etc. Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.com) is probably the largest wiki. It contains thousands of pages created and edited by its users. It is one of the largest collaborative wiki. There are basically two types of wikis; open-access wiki where users are allowed unrestricted access to add and edit the pages, documents and closed-access wiki where the access is restricted a limited number of users or members. Wikipedia is an example of open access wiki.

3. Difference between Blogs and Wikis

Although Blogs and Wikis are similar in some respects, there are some major differences between them. The following are some of the significant differences.

While Wikis are created with the purpose of documenting content which is of substantial and serious in nature, the purpose of the blogs is create something which is personal in nature. The tone in blogs is conversational while the wikis tend to contain considerable and information. Blogs are personal whereas the wikis are the production of collective effort of members of a group. It is essentially a joint-venture where any member of the group can revise, edit and contribute to the document. The wiki is fluid and may undergo constant revision. The document created in the beginning may undergo complete transformation and the end shape may be completely different from the original due to continuous editing by the members. Content in the blogs does not usually undergo changes as the users are not allowed to edit it as it contains personal views, ideas, thoughts etc.

4. Wiki as a Tool for Reflection

Wikis can be used as a tool for reflection both by teacher and students. A teacher can create a wiki for a specific class and write his thoughts and ideas at the end of his class. He can write about how he has taught the lesson and where he could have done better and invite other teachers to collaborate in the wiki by contributing to it by editing with their reflective thoughts. In the same way a student can create a wiki about his experiences in the classroom and invite other students to collaborate and edit the wiki with their reflective learning.

A wiki can be a wonderful tool to document one's experiences, thoughts, ideas, views etc. These wiki documents can be a great source of learning for the users in an educational setting. Administrators, teachers, students and other stakeholders can access these wikis and find ways to improve the overall teaching-learning process. Policy holders can frame policies using the learning gained from wikis of various educational institutions. Administrators can plan and organize the things using the feedback from the wikis. They can also replace the staffing using the feedback from students. The overall direction of the educational machinery can be set right using the reflections obtained from the wikis. Students and teachers and others involved in the process can cooperate and coordinate using the learnings from wikis.

Wikis can also be used both by teachers and students to develop a research project or a presentation where content, images, audio/video files etc., can all be added to the wiki and constantly edited by the users in a collaborative manner. Both can be used for creating knowledge

Cheng, Gary & Chau, J have conducted an interesting study on “A Comparative Study of Using Blogs and Wikis for Collaborative Knowledge Creation” in 2011. They have identified that ‘blog users are likely to create more online messages than wiki users. They have found that ‘both tools -blog and wiki lend themselves to knowledge construction, but blogs are more likely to help learners construct knowledge at a higher collaborative level’. (2011)

Elgort, Irina studied ‘wiki-based learning which seeks to combine conventions of academic study and approaches to knowledge creation and sharing of social software.’ (2007). In her study titled ‘Using Wikis as a learning tool in higher education’, she concluded that ‘students are able to adapt the wiki technology for academic tasks, but that the task may impose constraints on the use of wikis, leading to some of the advantages of the technology being lost in this adaptation’. (2007)

5. Wiki as Professional Development Activity

Wikis can be an effective tool for professional development activity for teachers. Continuous Professional Development is required for teachers at all levels. Online collaboration through wikis where senior teachers and expert teachers in a particular area of learning can create and collaborate for furthering the knowledge and methods of teaching. The benefit of these wikis is that teachers can learn at their own pace and in a free and open environment without inhibitions involved in face-to-face setting. Teachers can work on research project by dividing the topic among the teachers and finally combining all the parts.

Wikis can also be used for Faculty development programmes where these can be created similar to discussion forums and users are allowed to edit and add to the wiki. A group of researchers or teachers can come together to prepare a collaborative wiki to prepare a presentation on the ongoing research activity.

6. Conclusion

Wiki is an effective Web 2.0 tool for construction of knowledge in collaborative way. It can be used by both teachers and students to co-create new knowledge and share existing knowledge. It can also be used as reflective tool both by teachers to reflect and introspect on their teaching and learning practices and improve their ways. Use of AI tools in wikis is an area which requires further research by prospective researchers. The place of Wiki in today's world requires additional study and research.

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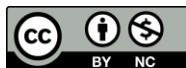
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