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Designing and implementing learning-centred blogs for university teaching: two cases

Dr Paula Hodgson
Faculty of Education
University of Hong Kong
etpaula@hku.hk
Outline

• Describing two categories of blog: community-based and course-based
• Illustration using two cases
  – ‘Orientation program students in SHTM’
  – ‘English for the media’
  • Outcomes
• Conclusion
Blog means...

Archiving

Digital diary

Self-expression

Asynchronous communication

Intellectual challenges

Social networking
Challenges

• Students tend to use blogs mostly for **entertainment** purposes; they are not accustomed to responding to other blogs (Davidson 2008)

• The majority may **not voluntarily** add postings because they do not perceive the value of doing so in an **educational** context
Features and potential of blogs in education

• **Connecting** learners with their ideas
• Allowing learners to **contribute more** than they might in a conventional face-to-face context (McConnell 2006)
• Reading ‘**up-to-the-minute posts**’ (Nardi *et al.* 2004)
• Reading through ‘**one convenient and coherent view**’ using RSS feeds (Martindale and Wiley 2005)
• Developing an effective learning community that encompasses both meaning and **quality interactions** between participants (Wenger 1998)
• Allowing a **non-course** audience access through subscription or by invitation (Tryon 2006)
Blogs in use

• Community-based – learners have individual blogs, and tasks are **semi-structured** to allow them to self-express, reflect and share experiences

• Course-based – **ONE** blog, and tasks are **structured** to develop the intended learning skills and acquire knowledge of the course
Community-based blogs

Resource- and activity-rich
• Learners have individual blogs
• Provide current resources
• Facilitate working in groups

Learners can
• Design and write their own learning logs creatively
• Reflect on in-class activities
• Communicate with group members
• Communicate between groups
• Be supported by mentors
• Share experiences between members and mentors
Case 1

Community-based blogs for orientation programme in the School of Hotel and Tourism Management (SHTM)

Programmes:
• Hotel management
• Tourism management
• Convention and event management
Blogging community: first-year students

Groups with mentors
Individual blog in the community-based blog

Submission: Task 1 of Workshop 4

1. Write a few paragraphs about your experience in today’s group activity. For example, how stress and time management techniques have been applied to the game?

Today, I think all of our group mates had fun in the workshop, especially during the game. To be honest, I felt nervous when I was assigned to be the GM who is the person coordinate the frontier and the production team. We were quite confusing at the beginning, as we didn’t know the rules of the game. Hopefully, we won the game with all correct guess from the clue. I learned how the communicate with team member and negotiate with other team GM to exchange the material we needed. Also, I had reminded our team member about the remaining time. I think it is one of the time management techniques I have applied to the game. About the stress management
Reflecting class activities

submissions of task 2 of workshop 3

My Multiple Intelligence test shows that I have people smart—I really agree with that and through the activity we had—I work along well with my groupmates—we all deliver our ideas well—and the bridge we built were the winner—with the longest 206 cm—so we call it the "206 Bridge" and took some photos—i am really glad about that!

throughout the process—me and my groupmates cooperate well and we all try our very best to find some useful materials to build the bridge—although we face difficulties at first—but after we discuss we test and we try—we finally built the wonderful "fast and safe 206 bridge"!

that's lovely to look at what our group has achieve!
Blogging group

Mentor from senior form inviting postings / sharing experience of university study
My Present

After finished typing My Past, I think I shall talk abt My Present. It's the 2nd yr I study in SHTM, as I said b4, I meet new fds and lecturers here and my favourite lecturer is Thomas, actually I met him when the time he's responsible for a talk in SPACE, talking about his 2nd love -- Antarctica (I think......), which is one of his expertise. I still remember I had asked him a question: Do you think the green house effect will be the biggest threat to the Antarctica's tourism industry? He's really a knowledgeable & funny guy...anyway, he's so kind that always thinks from our angle and comes up with the best solution to solve our problems, and it's becoz of him, I am recommended to assist Mr Tony Tse to update part of the HKTB website. In SHTM, opportunities are offered to me to get involved into various tasks like the one I mentioned b4 & "Viriel" which is a simulator of a virtual hotel.

When working in a group, do try to set all the rules and norms first, once the confrontation or argument exists, you maybe able to follow them to handle those situations, coz the ultimate result of an unhappy grouping can turn fds into enemies which u & me don't want to see. Anyway...communication is the key to succeed. by the way, it would be exciting if u can broaden ur horizon by making attempt to interviews with Co., even for group projects. For
Outcomes

The community-based nature of the blogs attracted many to view these postings. The blogs not only bridged the face-to-face and the virtual learning environment, they also scaffolded communications for students between courses, between students from local, exchange and international backgrounds, and across year groups.
Course-based blogs

Resource-rich
- Allow access by students from the same course or across cohorts
- Provide course-related resources
- Link to online discipline-related practice or journals
- Subscribe to high-quality articles with RSS feeds

Learners can
- Access resources
- Review current resources
- Practise writing tasks
- Reflect on learning activities
- Post comments
Case 2

Course-based blogs in ‘English for the media’:
Create multiple opportunities for students, as future journalists, to develop **writing fluency** and **presentation skills** in mass media.
Case 2

WebCT: content, discussion forum, email, assignment

Blogs:
Archived resource
Group blogs
Get yourself Vista-Capable

A notebook computer can bring you a convenient platform for working and entertainment. It can also lead you to the “Vista world”—a new standard of computer system with enhanced functions and capabilities.

Continue reading “Get yourself Vista-Capable”

Davis Carries the Warriors to Top the Top Seed

In the first game in NBA Playoffs 2007, Baron Davis, who finished with a near triple-double, led the eighth seed of the Western Conference to defeat the Dallas Mavericks, which is the top seed and have the best record of 67-15 this season.

Continue reading “Davis Carries the Warriors to Top the Top Seed”
Symbol of Red

In artistic angle, red represents courage, vigor and power. In history, red is a sign of the loyalty in army. In religion, red is used to illustrate grandeur in Buddhism while it represents the Holy Spirit in Christian. In eastern culture, red is a symbol of passion, future, hope and bravery. In short, red has a positive meaning in different races, different countries and different fields. In China, red represents full of joy in the festivities.

The day of Olympic torch relay is a significant grand occasion in Hong Kong. It is so meaningful to use red T-shirt, national and HKSAR flags as a mark of solidarity and unity of Hong Kong people to welcome the torch.

Show Our Support to Beijing Olympics

China tackled a lot of difficulties to win the right of hosting the Olympic Games and is facing many challenges during the torch relay, like the interruption of the torch relay by demonstratorists. It is Hong Kong’s pride to be the first stop of the torch relay in China after it has been carried through 19 cities across five continents. It is a good suggestion that everyone should wave the flag and dress in red on that day to show their support for the spirit of the Olympic Games and the torch.

We urge school principals and employers to allow their students and staff to dress in red so that all Hong Kong people can come forward in support of the Beijing Olympic
Enhancing writing with multimedia:
A promotional video for Olympic equestrian events in Hong Kong
Enhancing writing using images

(Captured by Apple)

Have you ever thought of meeting your soul mates through the Internet? Apart from chat rooms and dating websites, it's now very trendy to meet new friends, even lovers through online games.

Online game is one of the most popular entertainments in Hong Kong. You may think that only adolescents play online games. In fact, there are lots of people from different age groups playing online games regularly. Undoubtedly, most of them are teenagers. In holidays, they even play online games over 12 hours a day.

In fact, there is a special culture inside the world of online games. It is the marriage relationship among the players. Almost every player in the games has a lover but they are not real lovers. Do you want to have this kind of relationship which only exists in the invented world?

Carol Yeung, who has played online games for 2 years, met her boyfriend through an online game. It's very easy to meet new friends as long as you talk to the strangers actively. Also, there are many lovers who knew each other in online games and then moved to the real world.
Learning from the previous cohort

- Good examples
- Bad examples
Outcomes: Survey 2006-07

• ‘The online news blog enhanced my learning experience’ (mean = 4.00; s.d. = 0.385)

• ‘The online news blog was an effective way for me to share ideas and thoughts’ (mean = 4.00; s.d. = 0.61)

• ‘The online news blog enabled me to learn more from other students’ (mean = 4.00; s.d. = 0.67)

• The lowest score was ‘Did you encounter any technology problems while using the online news blog?’ (mean = 1.25; s.d. = 0.44)
Outcome: Survey 2007-08

- ‘The online news blog enabled me to learn more from reading the work of peers’ (mean = 4.09; s.d. = 0.53)
- ‘I welcomed group members sending me comments on my postings in the blog’ (mean = 4.09; s.d. = 0.53)
- The lowest score was ‘I am very familiar with postings to a blog’ (mean = 3.23; s.d. = 1.02).

Most of the educational activities inherent in course-based blogs are likely to become less frequent by the end of a course
Conclusion

- Learning-centred environment allows the **active participation of learners**
- Educators can design learning-centred blog: course-based and community-based, depending on the **intended learning outcomes** of a course or programme
- Learners can actively publish high-quality creative work, while their peers and students from previous cohorts can make **valid, just-in-time comments** that enable the **fostering of academic interdependence** in the learning community
THANK YOU

My contact: Paula Hodgson (etpaula@hku.hk)