

Weblogs as learning tools for aspirant reflective practitioners

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Weblogs as Learning Tools for Aspirant Reflective Practitioners

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Abstract

Weblogs, a mainstream social software, allow for externalizing thinking processes and subsequent review, and thus offer rich opportunities for modelling, reflection and feedback. We studied the assumption that weblogs are suitable tools to support and stimulate reflection on action in teacher training in the Netherlands. At the Alpine Rendez-Vous we would like to discuss the findings of our study, which include moderate positive findings with regard to reflection learning and technology use. Both (instructional) design issues and concerns related to the implementation of weblogs will be presented (e.g., the relation with e-portfolio). In addition, we would like to consider the redefinition of teacher training expertise needed for using weblog technology and the role of the (incipient) expert in the context of Web 2.0-powered changes in knowledge creation.

Extended summary

At the Alpine Rendez-Vous 2013, we would like to discuss weblogs, a mainstream social software, and focus on their use for reflective practice in teacher education. Weblogs allow for externalizing thinking processes and subsequent review, and thus offer rich opportunities for modelling, reflection and feedback. Their ability to display developmental processes in a structured way and the opportunity they offer to others (experts and peers) to comment on captured (learning) acts make weblogs powerful tools for learning and development (Deng & Yuen, 2011; Sim & Hew, 2010; Wopereis, Sloep, & Poortman, 2010). As tools for learning, weblogs particularly fit learning environments that adhere to social constructivist views on teaching and learning (cf. Palincsar, 1998).

Based on the results of an exploratory study by Wopereis et al. (2010), where student teachers reflected on their teaching practice during an 8-week internship, we would like to highlight (and discuss) the redefinition of teacher training expertise needed for using weblog technology and the role of the (incipient) expert in the context of Web 2.0-powered changes in knowledge creation. With respect to the former, we would like to focus on the importance of present-day technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPCK; Mishra & Koehler, 2006) regarding reflective weblog use. A teacher trainer who wants to make use of weblogs to supervise the co-construction of professional teaching competences, needs skills to design, construct, and implement weblog-based learning environments. Further, additional expertise in online monitoring of learner-learner, learner-expert, and learner-content should be gained (cf. Chou, 2003). The importance of monitoring skills for teacher trainers touches our second research topic: the role of the expert in the context of Web 2.0-powered changes in knowledge creation and dissemination. In a weblog-based learning environment the learner constructs knowledge in interaction with a variety of sources: self (earlier written posts), peers, and experts. In case the weblog learning community is further

opened to other professionals, the teacher trainer is no longer the 'almighty expert' who dictates what is good and what is wrong, but transforms into a learning coach who can evaluate the trustworthiness of weblogs contributors (peers and other experts) and content (weblog post, comments, and other sources)(Lieberman & Pointer-Mace, 2010; Wopereis & Van Merriënboer, 2011).

Our research on weblog use for reflective practice in teacher education will be used to illustrate the aforementioned issues (Wopereis et al., 2010; Kirschner & Wopereis, in press).

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