
Educational blogging: Implications, benefits and challenges to pedagogical practice

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Technology these days is present in nearly every field of the students' lives. We enjoy the benefits of its use, especially in the field of education. More specifically, access to internet has dramatically transformed both teaching and learning and, therefore, teaching methodologies have faced more questions. One of these questions is whether educational blogging can be utilised as an innovative teaching tool to achieve curricular goals. There is a growing corpus of literature on blogs as an effective learning tool in education, and evidence has shown that educational blogging is not a new phenomenon. Considering these observations, the discussion centres on how blogging in an educational setting produces several benefits. In the same vein, the paper also explores the disadvantages of blogging in this setting. Discussions highlight the fundamental implications for professional development in pedagogical uses of educational blogging.

Keywords: blogging, curriculum, education, learning, pedagogical practices, teaching

The digital practice known as blogging is sweeping the internet and the number of educational bloggers is growing exponentially. Hence, one of the major tasks of a teacher is, nowadays, believed to be trying to improve digital competence of students so that they can use Information and Communication Technology in the modern community. Blogging is having a blog available on the internet and maintaining or adding new entries to a blog, which can serve pedagogical purposes well, via diverse and creative communication activities. As an educational tool, blogs are one of the user-friendly technological means that may be integrated in a multi-aspect manner to include all learners in the process of learning. There are many ways to use blogging in teaching and learning. One can use an existing blog to provide information and insights. Classroom management, collaboration, discussions and having comprehensive archives for student portfolios are among some benefits of using blogging as a teaching tool. Doing this in the realm of transformative teaching could be made possible via integrating the use of these technologies while doing different activities across the curriculum. Attempts have been made to investigate the possible advantages and difficulties of using blogs in translator training from teachers' points of view and the underlying reasons for these difficulties (Azizinezhad & Hashemi, 2011). Technology and the employment of e-tools within the education domain have brought about unprecedented impact on educational deliverables and deliverances. Teaching and learning have equally been enhanced. Learning theorists have suggested that tool-use has contributed to the evolution of human language and cognitive development (Wertsch, 1985). Tool-use extends our sense of self-identity, social identity, and our experiences of social relationships within places.

Education professionals use specific kinds of technologies (analogue and digital) and are influenced by characteristics of the technologies they use (Watson, 2001). Our social and cultural understanding of tools and complex digital technologies affect our ability to use them for learning (Pierson, 2001). The context and conditions of these understandings affect how we know, when, where, and why ICT belongs in our educational practices. Several advantages of using blogs, wikis, and podcasts have been identified which translates to the fact that technology has brought with it more convenience, independence to students learning, and has enabled students to reveal their natural propensity to show their creativity (Mapuva, Stoltenkamp, & Muyengwa, 2010). The explosion of technological growth with Web 2.0 applications and more recently, Web 3.0, has opened new and exciting learning possibilities. There is a growing body of literature on weblogs or blogs as an effective learning tool in higher education. While evidence has shown that educational blogging is not a new phenomenon, the use of blogs in teaching and learning in higher education particularly in Malaysia is still in its infancy. Hence, there was a preliminary attempt to gather data and information on educational blogging that is significant to the Asian culture, particularly multicultural Malaysia and its potential to be a transformational technology for teaching and learning. The findings show that while the acceptance of the use of blogs as learning tool among Malaysian students were encouraging, there are some challenges to be considered when using the blog as a learning tool (Song & Chan, 2008).

In a similar vein, Angelaina & Jimoyiannis (2012) reports on the investigation of students' engagement in an educational blog established as a project-based learning environment. Twenty-one secondary education students (aged 15 years), coming from two separate K-9 classes, were involved in this learning activity. Using the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework, the analysis of the content posted shed light into the multiple ways of students' engagement into the blog learning space, namely their social and cognitive presence that supported the development of a CoI. The results suggested that the students in the sample achieved higher cognitive levels through enhancing their communication and collaboration skills, and their analytical and critical thinking as well.

Blogging is characterised by an individual exploration of ideas of personal interest through frequent online posts, documenting ideas as they emerge over time. Community emerges as bloggers read and link across blogs, based on shared interests. Blogs have gained acceptance in higher education for a variety of instructional activities, among which, reflective journal writing is popular (Relojo, 2015).

Freeman & Brett (2012) examined a project in which blogs were implemented within an online graduate course to create opportunities for students to reflect on their academic, professional and personal interests, with the goal of establishing consistent blogging that exhibits the timely, frequent and interest-driven practices of blogging outside educational contexts. Students enrolled in an online graduate course maintained individual blogs in which they were prompted to write about their interests and experiences as graduate students. Through an analysis of the patterns of prompt use and blog content, as well as data from a post-course survey and an online discussion, researches explored how to support student engagement with blogging practice within an educational setting. Findings suggest that *frequency* of writing, *topic resonance* with the students' own interests, and the *timeliness* of entries were key factors in scaffolding writing that aligns with blogging practice. By focusing on writing as characterised by authentic blogging practice, the study contributed to an understanding of how to harness the unique communicative elements of the blog in post-secondary settings.

The internet, as described by McCrae (2006), offers a seemingly limitless choice of conversation and community through blogs and chat room forums. One would assume that with a vast array of communicative possibilities on the internet, intellectual exchanges would be noticeably varied, and critical discourse would thrive within a diverse and organic cyberspace. Are blogs and chat forums providing authentic opportunities for critical discourse or are they, ironically, presenting some significant challenges to intellectual diversity and critical thought due to a phenomenon known as the 'echo-chamber effect'? It is the intent of this paper to establish a general understanding of this phenomenon and its emergence within popular culture, while situating in educational discourse some of the potential implications to teaching, learning, and pedagogical practice.

AIMS

With the ever-changing nature of learning and teaching in classrooms, it is crucial that educators explore more effective ways of helping students achieve their educational goals. However, previous research suggests that the integration of educational blogging into courses can be difficult and cites problems with issues such as student compliance. To unpack these challenges, the present paper will highlight the implications, benefits, and challenges of educational blogging. The central discussion underscores the essential implications, along with the challenges, for professional development in pedagogical uses of educational blogging.

DISCUSSION

Implications of educational blogging

Since the early years of the twenty-first century there has been an increasing interest in using Web 2.0 technologies to support learning in higher education. However, previous research suggests that the integration of blogging into courses can be difficult and cites problems with issues such as student compliance. Kerawalla et al. (2008) adopt a learner-centred perspective and explore students' (rather than their educators') understanding of how blogs and blogging can support distance learning in higher education. They report on a study of UK Open University (OU) students on an online distance learning master's course, that has enabled them to determine the issues that are important to these bloggers, and they describe five ways in which they appropriated blogging to suit their individual needs. They discuss the importance of making blogging activities flexible so that students can blog to meet their own needs while still attending to the requirements of their course.

Educational blogging does not entail much technical knowledge, which makes it a more inclusive tool for the non-computer savvy teachers. Furthermore, blogging is educational: by and large, we are teachers, but, undeniably, we are also learners. How can we teach students to love learning if we are unreceptive of new learning tools ourselves? Teachers can use a blog to stay connected with students, parents and with an entire school community. They can also use a blog to publish and publicise photos,

articles, newsletters, class activities and projects, as well as to keep parents updated about the students' progress.

Students now have at their disposal a range of Web 2.0 authoring forms such as audio and video podcasting, blogging, social bookmarking, social networking, virtual world activities and wiki writing. Many university educators are interested in enabling students to demonstrate their learning by creating content in these forms. However, the design and conduct of assessment for such student-created content is not straightforward. Based upon a review of current literature and examples in the public domain, key challenges for academic assessment that arise from students' use of Web 2.0 authoring forms has been identified. Researchers describe and analyse selected cases where academics have set assessable student Web 2.0 activities in a range of fields of study, noting especially the inter-relationship of learning objectives, assessment tasks, and marking criteria. Researchers make recommendations for practice, research and understanding to strengthen educational quality and academic integrity in the use of Web 2.0 authoring forms for assessable student learning (Gray, Thompson, Sheard, Clerehan, & Hamilton, 2010). Educational blogging harnessed its principles from blog psychology which is the intersection of blogging and psychological principles (Relajo, 2017). Potential theories of blog psychology may incorporate the readers' perception, cognition, and humanistic components regarding their experience to consuming blogs. It could also explore a range of psychological principles involved in running blogs.

In a separate paper, Gray, Chang, and Kennedy (2010) explains that much research into the use of online information and communication technologies for the internationalisation of learning and teaching has focused on established web technologies. This paper considers the possible internationalisation implications of existing uses of social software, also known as Web 2.0 technologies, which are now widely available inside and outside of formal education settings. The paper reports on two studies: the first, conducted at a large Australian university, investigated differences between international and domestic undergraduate students' ($n = 1973$) use of web-based technologies and tools; the second investigation reports on interviews with eight Australian and eight Singaporean university students about their use and perceptions of blogs and blogging. The findings from two studies provide new evidence of both cultural similarities and cultural differences in aspects of young university students' use of social software for communication and content creation. Discussion and conclusions draw out factors to be considered in planning to implement new uses of social software among culturally and linguistically diverse students of the Net Generation, in Australia and more generally, in other countries.

The purpose of an earlier study (Top, Yukselturk, & Inan, 2010) was to examine pre-service teachers' perceived benefits of instructional blogs, classroom community, course satisfaction, and learning. The data were obtained via surveys administered throughout Autumn 2009. Fifty pre-service teachers from two undergraduate courses participated in this study. Results indicate that students did not utilise the full benefits of blogging. Students mainly used blogs for information sharing, rather than discussion or reflection. Additionally, pre-service teachers' course satisfaction and perceived learning were found to be related to their feeling a sense of learning community.

Knowledge building is a widely recognised pedagogical approach to organising school education. It emphasises the collective cognitive contributions of students in collaboratively developing the knowledge bases through which classroom learning communities support intentional learning and autonomous learners (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 2006). Designing and developing learning environments to support effective knowledge building calls for a thorough understanding of its social, communicative, and cognitive dimensions. Technology has and continues to play a prominent role in this process. For instance, in transforming our perceptions of knowledge from those individually-produced reified artefacts into collaboratively built dynamic creations, Web 2.0 technologies support the underlying theory and principles of knowledge building. By dramatically changing the online behaviour of learners, technologies such as wiki, blog, social bookmarking, social networking, and tagging dramatically

demonstrate how Web 2.0 can support the social, communicative, and cognitive dimensions of knowledge building. Additionally, the researchers discussed challenges currently facing the knowledge building and how emerging Web 2.0 technologies can meet the challenges of advancing our understanding of the new sciences of learning.

Benefits of educational blogging

One of the ways that educational blogging could be of importance to students is that it could facilitate reading. Most students struggle with this. For instance, an earlier study (Relajo, dela Rosa, & Pilao, 2016) assessed the reading difficulties experienced by 150 Filipino university students about vocabulary, grammar usage, as well as paragraph analysis and paragraph organisation. It has been discussed that an analysis of reading abilities among second language readers will provide a deeper understanding of the reading process as language-dependent rather than as universal. Furthermore, the study has also provided implications on the nature of second language reading, the database in second language reading, text- and knowledge-driven operations in second language reading, and second language reading classroom factors. Assessment of comprehension is briefly reviewed, and recommendations are provided for theoretical, cultural, and educational implications.

During the past decades, the way that researchers and educators understand and describe the process of reading has been revolutionised. The present article examines the current developments in reading abilities among second language readers. The developments are further discussed in terms of a theory of general second language proficiency encompassing both oral and written language. Implications on the nature of second language reading, the database in second language reading, text-and knowledge-driven operations in second language reading, and second language reading classroom factors have been provided. Assessment of comprehension is briefly reviewed, and recommendations are provided for theoretical, cultural, and educational implications. An overview of an experimental fluency programme that attempts to address multiple components in the development of reading abilities has also been discussed (Relajo, dela Rosa, Pilao, 2016). An educational blog can also help us to reflect. For instance, one study (Wopereis, Sloep, & Poortman, 2010) examined the use of blogs to promote student teachers' reflective practice. The assumption was explored that blogs are suitable tools to support and stimulate reflection on action in teacher training and consequently to enhance the students' ability to reflect. Three groups of student teachers used blogs to reflect on teaching practice during an 8-week internship. Students were asked: (1) to reflect on their own teaching experiences and, (2) to provide peer feedback. Analyses of student contributions show that blogs are useful for reflection on critical incidents in the classroom and that they can stimulate interconnectivity in groups of students. However, blogs do not incite deep reflection or spiral reflection, which can only be the result of explicit instruction. This exploratory study further shows that large-scale quantitative research is needed to support the premise that blogs are suitable tools for reflection. Moreover, teachers often look back on what has happened in their classroom and usually wonder what they could have done better. Educational blogging can help with this process, enabling educators to keep an ongoing personal record of their actions, decisions, through processes, successes and failures, and issues with which they must deal.

Reflective practice is important and can help students with what they are going through. For instance, it has been revealed on a study that adolescence is marked by dramatic developmental changes in physical, cognitive, and social-emotional aspects. To date, there is limited information on long-term outcomes that centre on adolescent depression which explores the role of family subsystems. This study (Acharya, Pilao, & dela Rosa, 2017) investigates the role of psychosocial variables as correlates and antecedents to depressive symptoms among male adolescents. It further explores the impact of parent-child relationship and cognitive distortion to depressive symptoms. A battery of self-report measures was administered to 150 male adolescents. Regression analysis reveals four variables that were linked to adolescent depression. Father overprotection ($\beta = 0.10$) is positively linked to depression among male adolescents, while father care dimension of parent-child relationship is linked to adolescent depression

($\beta = 10.10$). The findings also suggest that as mothers exert a degree of psychological control, the high-quality parent-child relationship a son shares with his father becomes less of a risk for adolescent aggression. Overall, these outcomes support the improvement of access to adolescent mental health services.

On the other hand, blogs encourage students to read and write, which improves their literacy. It can serve as a digital portfolio providing storage for students' works, photos and other necessary materials. In that perspective blog fosters collaboration between students and offers the opportunity to track their progress in their works by comparing the older and newer outcomes. A blog is the place where students can publish their own posts, where they can participate in a discussion that goes on the blog and, overall, a place where to transform learning as process that is more enjoyable, meaningful, and less stressful.

Blogging builds community. Blog offers collaboration among teachers, students or any others involved in activities from the commodity of our home or elsewhere where we have internet access. Blogging widens your horizons. Interactive web-access has led to a growth in blogging, a process whereby authors publicly post messages, respond to others, and can publicly disseminate their thoughts to the public. Some college instructors have been quick to augment instruction with blogs which are focused on content matter and for peer review of work and commentary. There is, however, no indication that blogs are effective supplements to the teaching-learning process. Findings suggested that the reinforcing of course engagement and the repetition of exposure to coursework are the most valuable aspects of blogging (Brescia & Miller, 2006). The current study was conducted to generate some initial consensus about the instructional advantages of blogging in college settings.

Challenges of educational blogging

Current systems used in education follow a consistent design pattern, one that is not supportive of lifelong learning or personalisation is asymmetric in terms of user capability and disconnected from the global ecology of Internet services. In this paper we propose an alternative design pattern for educational systems that emphasises symmetric connections with a range of services both in formal and informal learning, work, and leisure, and identify strategies for implementation and experimentation (Wilson et al., 2007). With the gradual adoption of Web 2.0 technologies, one of the key Web 2.0 technologies, the blog, has become a popular and wide-accepted Web application. Although mobile device users can access the Web whenever or wherever the need arises, there is not an easy way to publish their thoughts and experiences via blog articles. In this study, researchers offered a solution by designing a mobile blogging system which enables mobile bloggers to publish their comments in authentic context anytime and anywhere. Researchers showed that with the help of the mobile blogging system, educators can establish a collaborative learning model for students in virtual classrooms. The results revealed from the learning outcome are positive and encouraging regarding the effectiveness of the supported collaborative learning model. In the conclusion, researchers discussed the findings and applications of the proposed system in collaborative learning (Huang, Jeng, & Huang, 2009). Cuban & Jandric (2015) discusses ideas about a topic from the Special Issue of E-learning and Digital Media 'Networked realms and hoped-for futures: A trans-generational dialogue' with one of its co-editors, Petar Jandric. The conversation explores the historical relationships between education and information and communication technologies and draws lessons for present and future. The first part of the conversation explores methodological issues pertaining to historical thinking about schools and computers in the network society. It identifies a continued need to recognise historical patterns, including those in thought experiments, and shows that Rogers' theory of diffusion of innovations should be supplemented by more nuanced approaches to the historical relationships between schools and computers. The second part of the conversation presents an attempt to explain historical patterns using the ancient notion of magical thinking. It explores why teachers use computers in their private lives much more than in their professional lives, and 'school anarchy' caused by student usage of personally owned devices in

classrooms. It creates a baseline for comparison between desktop and laptop computers and various hand-held devices and dismantles the quest for de-schooling as another example of magical thinking. The third part of the conversation examines the ideological role of information and communication technologies in contemporary school reform and explores their potential for democracy. It analyses the contemporary transformations of traditional publishing formats such as books, journals and newspapers, and their reflections in the world of academia. It examines the changing role of teachers as public intellectuals, and the role of information and communication technologies in their public exposure. The last part of the conversation analyses the process of 'educationalising' various social and economic problems, and links it to contemporary technologies. It revisits Larry Cuban's predictions from *Teachers and Machines: Classroom Use of Technology Since 1920* (1986), and reminds us that accurate predictions are rare, while inaccurate ones are not only common but often memorable. Finally, it examines why it is so hard to balance education with information and communication technologies.

Blogging has been recommended as a suitable tool for learning during internship due to its associated usefulness in collaborative learning, reflection, communication, and social support. In this study, blogging was incorporated into the internship activities of two discipline-specific groups of interns: information management ($n=53$) and nursing ($n=28$). In examining the behaviour, perceptions and processes of blogging among interns from the two disciplines, a mixed-methods design was used to obtain quantitative and qualitative data through structured interviews and blogging entries. Results revealed that the interns engaged regularly in the writing and reading of their own blogs and commented on others' blog-writing. The interns perceived blogs to be useful during internship in providing an avenue for knowledge construction, problem solving, reflection, and communicating their emotions. Positive perceptions were not influenced by discipline background, frequency of use, or blogging platform. Qualitative analyses of blog contents indicated that the students engaged in cognitive, metacognitive-reflective, affective, and social-collaborative learning processes in blogging. Higher engagement was found in cognitive and metacognitive processes. Responses to open-ended probes suggest that pedagogical factors (e.g., grading system, supervision) may also have influenced students' blogging behaviours and perceptions. Overall, this study offers evidence to support the use of blogging during internship as computer-based support for learning. Watson (2001) addresses a conundrum: despite the ubiquity of technology in the business world, no clear role has emerged in education. After many years of national policies and investment in information technologies in the UK and elsewhere, technology is still an imposed and novel 'outsider' in the pedagogy of schools.

CONCLUSION

This paper charts a series of experiences and failures in the UK and highlights the unresolved dichotomy of purpose about why ICT should be used in education. Understanding the problematic process of using Information Technologies demands a consideration of some more fundamental educational issues. ICT is often perceived as a catalyst for change, change in teaching style, change in learning approaches, and change in access to information. Yet the rhetoric for change has been too associated with the symbolic function of technology in society, which sits uncomfortably with teachers' professional judgements. So educational computing, it would appear, has yet to find its own voice. This paper explores this notion. Blogs are being heralded as the 'next big thing' in education. In this article we examine the advantages and disadvantages of this form of internet-based interaction using the CoI model with its focus on social, cognitive and teaching presences. We conclude that blogging has distinct advantages over more common threaded discussion in its support of style, ownership and identity, and its public nature may enhance resolution phases of cognitive presence. However, its lack of safety and the current inefficiencies of linking and threading messages present greater challenges than the more familiar threaded discussion or email list. Perhaps the blog's greatest relative advantage is for non-formal and open education that takes learning beyond the traditional course (Cameron & Anderson, 2006). As argued by McLoughlin & Lee (2010), to be successful university learners, students need to develop skills in self-directed learning. This encompasses a range of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills including

generating one's own learning goals, planning how to tackle a problem, evaluating whether learning goals have been met, and re-planning based on this evaluation. The educational affordances of blogs offer opportunities for students to become self-directed learners in a supportive social environment. Based on the qualitative analysis of design diaries written by 113 computer science students about a creative project, this paper presents a framework of the ways in which blogging activities can assist groups of students and their teachers in the development of a range of cognitive, social and self-directed learning skills. Although the students in this study used the commenting feature of blogs effectively to praise and encourage their peers, and give hints and tips for solving problems, they did not coach each other on higher order skills. The paper discusses how this could be achieved to extend the educational value of blogging within a university learning community.

Although the potentials of ICT such as blogs seem to be obvious, universities find challenges in using them pedagogically (Muwanga-Zake, Parkes, & Gregory, 2010). For example, there is dissonance between blogging and pedagogy, or rather a gap between rhetoric about blog potential and blog practice, which has prompted this investigation and professional development in the use of blogs at the University of New England (UNE). Preliminary findings show fundamental implications for professional development in pedagogical uses of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Educational blogs may be great educational tools and they give students complete freedom to publish content on the web, but if an educator does not know how to effectively implement them into the classroom, they are only as good as wadded up balls of paper in the rubbish.

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