TEACHING COMMUNICATION SKILLS STUDENT ENGAGEMENT THROUGH BLOGGING

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ABSTRACT

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KEYWORDS: Blogging, Engagements, ICT-Intervention, Students

INTRODUCTION

Preamble

Learning is not unlike the Borg; it thrives by assimilating technologies never originally intended for education (Joyce Seitzinger). This analogy by Star –Trek is very apt for the phenomenon of Blogging. Blog like Borg believes in connecting and assimilating each other ideas, knowledge, opinions, feedbacks and inputs to have collective knowledge generation.

Issues and Concerns

In university, teaching is the one part of whole learning process, other consist of student engagement which is provided by information reported by the students themselves, which is measured through higher-order problem-solving and meta-cognitive learning strategies through sources such as student projects, exhibitions and learning journals or logs. Class room teaching in this dynamic world is turning out to be very challenging, to inspire and initiate student into give and take process of teaching, innovative and attractive methods are needed. Need is to make exercises more interactive and more student-driven instead of faculty-driven. Written communication skills is emerging as a life-skill tool . Empirical studies have suggested that in spite of having good and sound technical knowledge, students are not able to do well during the screening process of job acquirement, while-on-job and also when it came to career advancement among peers. The written communication is acting as a decisive point in all the major points of professional life. To make students equip with this skill it is needed to have extensive exercises during the UG and PG level itself.

The Promise

I has been felt during the informal interaction with students that to perk up the interest level of students in writing, extensive use of blogs can be used.Some uses are as follows:
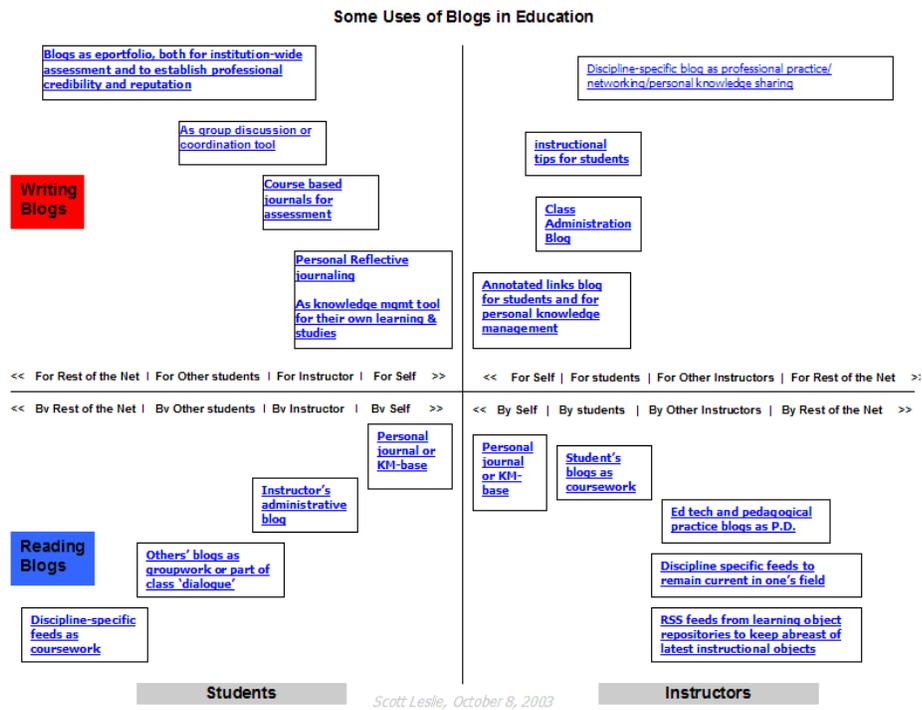
Some Uses of Blogs in Education

| Blogs as eportfolio, both for institution-wide assessment and to establish professional credibility and reputation | | Discipline-specific blog as professional practice/ networking/personal knowledge sharing |

Writing Blogs

- As group discussion or coordination tool
- Course based journals for assessment
- Personal Reflective journaling
- As knowledge mgmt tool for their own learning & studies

- instructional tips for students
- Class Administration Blog
- Annotated links blog for students and for personal knowledge management

<< For Rest of the Net | For Other students | For Instructor | For Self >>   << For Self | For students | For Other Instructors | For Rest of the Net >>

<< By Rest of the Net | By Other students | By Instructor | By Self >>   << By Self | By students | By Other Instructors | By Rest of the Net >>

Reading Blogs

- Personal journal or KM-base
- Instructor's administrative blog
- Others' blogs as groupwork or part of class 'dialogue'
- Discipline-specific feeds as coursework

- Personal journal or KM-base
- Student's blogs as coursework
- Ed tech and pedagogical practice blogs as P.D.
- Discipline specific feeds to remain current in one's field
- RSS feeds from learning object repositories to keep abreast of latest instructional objects

Students   *Scott Leslie, October 8, 2003*   **Instructors**

Figure 1: Matrix of Possible Uses of Blogs in Education (Leslie, 2003)

Usage

Blogs can be used in following manner

- Students asked to write their own blogs as part of their course grade as term assignments and the piece will be commented upon from the fellow classmates, thus it will ensure high level of interaction and exchange of thoughts

- Used as a collaborative discussion space by teachers and students

- Using blogs to organize class seminars and to provide summaries of readings

- Instructors giving additional teaching resources by liking it to their blog page

Implementation Vehicle

Learning management systems, such as **Sakai (http://sakaiproject.org/),** provides technology-supported teaching learning and research. Other blogging sites such as Wordpress, Blogspot and son on can also be used.

Advantages

- Today tech-savy students like working on internet as it not only take put boredom but also it will help them relate, connect and exchange more with their peers. The starting and maintaining the blogging with their individual style will give them more personal feeling. They will be able to show their individual style through opting of various templates and formats and styles, some studies have found that blogging can provide a sense of ownership over work. The sense of ownership may motivate students, perhaps from a sense of pride, to continue blogging and to make greater efforts in their studies (Dickey, 2004; Du & Wagner, 2005)

- More confident students can open up blog to different category of readers apart from their teachers and peers, students from other classes, or even other countries, their parents, and potentially anyone with access to the Internet. This will generate more comments/feedbacks and thus higher level of interest . Studies suggested that getting comments "was a competition". They also said that they had to "fight to get comments". Other students said that they were compelled to attract comments because "comments make you feel proud". One student went so far as to claim that receiving no comments was like "life without water"(Leslie and Murphy)

- Even shy and quiet students can find their voice while blogging.

- They may choose the topics to blog by themselves; this will ensure interest in written communication as well as accuracy in writing the assuagements

- It will increase the sense of community in a class.

- It will stop the copying and reproducing assignments from the classmates

- Accelarates critical and logical thinking

- It will acts as an online portfolio of student written work and will help them to create repository of their work .

- It will help them to have open mindedness which in turn will facilitate distinguishing between differing viewpoints, accepting different interpretations(Jonassen, Carr & Hsiu-Ping, 1998 as quoted in Leslie and Murphy)

Going Beyond

Some fun activities like setting the word limit (140 characters only) will ensure bloggers to be precise and concise in their expressions thus inculcating importance of précis writing Guest bloggers can be called, International link ups can also be done , photo –blog can also be initiated

Some Observations

Below is the summary of the review paper done by Leslie and Murphy, the focal point of the study was social interaction , but it is very evident that sharing, collaboration and transferring learning is one of the part of Blogging exercise.

Table 1: Summary of Purposes of Social Software and Blogging

Purposes	Author
supports group interaction	Anderson, 2005
indicates user on-line presence; notification of new content; filtering of content; cooperative learning support; referring; modeling of interaction; help features; and documenting, storing and sharing of content	
may facilitate social presence	
offers a means to share knowledge and help others	
can potentially facilitate social interactions	
transforms the learning process from a "personal activity to a social activity"	Anderson & Kanuka, 1998
can potentially expose learners' ideas and opinions more readily to an audience	
can more readily expose learners to audience's ideas	
can record experiences for reflection	Xie & Sharma, 2005
supports learning by providing different viewpoints	
transforms the individual learning process into a social learning experience	Garrison, 1995
supports community-centered instruction	Gergen, 2002

Table 1: Contd.,

can foster group learning situations where each individual contributes knowledge to the group	Anderson & Kanuka, 1998
increases opportunities for social interaction	Grant, 2006; Gergen, 2001
allows collaborative activities	Du & Wagner, 2005
can provide a source of motivation through the "immediacy and frequency" of feedback	
facilitates distinguishing between differing viewpoints, accepting different interpretations	Jonassen, Carr & Hsiu-Ping, 1998
can provide a forum for knowledge-building activities	Scardamalia & Bereiter 1999
can foster collaborative learning within an organized community	Hakkinen & Jarvela, 2006
affords the chance to put thoughts "in the context of others"'	Oravec, 2002
allows students to outline their own perspectives	
provides a sense of development over time	
shifts the onus from the teacher to the educational group	Educause Horizon Report,2005
allows students to share a wide range of generic knowledge	Brooks, Nichols, & Priebe, 2004; Oravec, 2002
acknowledges the attributes of learners as individuals and as a group	Glogoff, 2005
expresses the importance of social and peer interaction	
highlights the importance of individual contributions	
gives learners an opportunity to make themselves heard	
enables students to assert their own perspectives and so make a greater effort	

 (**source:** http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/560/1099)

This summary indicates twofold purpose , first blogging as a social integration tool and second blogging as a supporting, facilitating mechanism. It not only increases opportunities for social ,peer and group interaction but also gives push to collaborative info-assimilation. (Post-Secondary Students' Purposes for Blogging (Leslie and Murphy)

CONCLUSIONS

With the crossing of web from 1.0 to 2.0, social media lke blogging is emrgiung as a very effective tool for think-share-collaborate model. It is helping in connecting and assimilating each other ideas, knowledge, opinions, feedback and inputs to have collective knowledge generation. The blogs are empowering even slow learners and quite students to have a say , thus percolating the power and usage of blogging to even the weakest participant.

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