

Blogging: an inquiry into the efficacy of a web-based technology for student reflection in community college computer science programs.

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Blogging: An Inquiry into The Efficacy of a Web-based Technology for Student Reflection in Community College Computer Science

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Date of Award

2006

Document Type

Dissertation

Degree Name

Doctor of Philosophy in Information Systems (DISS)

Department

Graduate School of Computer and Information Sciences

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Abstract

Reflection in learning is a pedagogical technique used to promote the higher order cognitive skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation that constitute the concept of critical thinking. To foster reflection in learning, the Internet technology of online journals known as blogs was employed in a two-semester, four-course investigation of the efficacy of this educational technology for vocational computer science students in a community college. The process involved an instructor-designed and maintained course blog containing suggestions for student reflection as well as hyperlinks to individual student peer blogs. Students were required to read both the course and peer blogs, and to contribute to a personal reflective blog.

The methodology used for the research was an exploratory hybrid of quantitative and qualitative techniques using three instruments: a survey of student demographics, a reflective essay, and the body of blog postings. A content analysis of key words and phrases culled from the to stings and essays was computer generated. Descriptive statistical analysis of the frequency and duration of blogging evolved into an author defined classification of emergent student blogger types.

The primary goal of the investigation was an exploration of any resultant evidence of student critical thinking and a subsequent evaluation of the emergent blogging technology in providing a mechanism for reflection. Paralleling the dual private and public nature of blogging, research by Henri (1991) and Garrison (2001 , 1992) benchmarked the collaborative or public nature of the technology while Bloom's taxonomy (1956) served as the standard for measuring individual critical thought. The results indicated that the uniqueness of blogging technology effectively recorded critical thinking and furthermore provided the learner with a personal voice that created a sense of ownership of ideas, active participation and empowerment in personal learning, and a contribution to the collaborative learning effort.

Through the use of learner-centric critical reflection on experiential, explorative, and

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social learning events, learning changed from a passive, static accumulation of teacher-centric facts and skills to an engaged, dynamic comprehension of concepts by the learner. The exploratory investigation incorporated technology with learning as both an individual learning mechanism, and as a collaborative repository for course enrichment.

NSUWorks Citation

Jane W. Perschbach. 2006. *Blogging: An Inquiry into The Efficacy of a Web-based Technology for Student Reflection in Community College Computer Science Programs*. Doctoral dissertation. Nova Southeastern University. Retrieved from NSUWorks, Graduate School of Computer and Information Sciences. (769)
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