

Enhancing Face-to-Face Courses with
Web 2.0 Tools

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REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Web-enhanced collegiate courses allow students to access course content, support and assistive resources online. College students are faced with issues or problems to solve, related to course content and assignments outside of the traditional classroom. Effective online enhancements provide students with on-demand resources to increase the likelihood of meeting the course objectives. (Pop et al., 2012).

Traditional college courses have seen various structural changes in recent years as educational technologies became available. Educational technologies allow professors to engage students with class material using interactive tools. This advancement allows instructors to participate in student-centered educational activities whereby the experience can be modified to address specific learning styles (Lumpkin et al., 2015)

The incorporation of Web 2.0 tools, social media and asynchronous communication tools allows for follow-up inquiries and discussions of lecture components of a course. As George et al. (2013) explain, “Tools used in [to] facilitate peer-to-peer and peer-to-lecturer engagement, [provide] students with control over the content and flow of the lecture, and enable space for sensitive and probing questions” (p. 987). Allowing students the opportunity to review, playback and reflect on course content reinforces the information and enhances the learning process.

Active Learning

Active learning is an integral part of an effective web-enhanced college-level course. Students’ active participation in the learning community typically results in positive student outcomes (Romanov & Nevgi, 2007). Incorporation of active learning strategies in web-enhanced classes have proven to positively affect the student experience. Student outcomes are also improved when they participate in active learning exercises with peers both in and outside the classroom; this includes online environments (Lumpkin et al., 2015). Procedural information

should also be provided to students by the instructors to ensure that expectations of the course activity are understood (Hazari et al., 2013).

Social Media Integration in Education

Social media integration into college-level courses allows for opportunities for group collaboration outside of the classroom. Social media outlets also provide students with a venue for peer-to-peer support and comradery throughout the process of completing online learning activities (MacDonald, 2005).

Web 2.0 technologies, specifically social media, provide students with opportunities to enhance their academic experience by providing additional possibilities to interact with instructors outside of the classroom. The open communication and accessibility will benefit students' academic performance. Student outcomes are improved with additional opportunities for collaboration and support (Piotrowski, 2015).

Inclusion of Video

Video integration in online educational settings allows students to build stronger relationships with their peers and professors. The incorporation of video correspondence enables students to interact with learning tools and communicate with classmates about the course content in an alternative way. Intensifying the web-based environment in this manner allows students to study the versatile course content in different ways (Romanov & Nevgi, 2007).

The "flipped classroom" practice utilizes videos to deviate from the traditional information delivery method of lecturing students in the classroom. In this scenario, instructors record lectures and post the recordings to an online environment (social media, learning management system, etc.) and time in the classroom is not spent on lectures. This practice allows

for more interactive and active learning assignments to be completed inside of the classroom (George et al., 2013).

Enhanced discussions with online video tools such as *Flipgrid* (www.flipgrid.com) allows students and instructors to record and share video responses recorded on mobile devices or by webcams. The recordings can be embedded in learning management systems, websites, blog entries, emails or on the video tool's website. Free online video tools, such as *Flipgrid*, encourage students to interact with each other regarding the course content in an alternative way (Romanov & Nevgi, 2007).

A-Synchronous Communication Tools

A-synchronous communication technology tools in web-enhanced college-level courses allow students to interact and communicate with their peers and instructors at a specific time that is convenient for them. The convenience of online a-synchronous communication provides students with flexibility to engage with their course content at any time before assignments are due and to review previously delivered correspondence (MacDonald, 2005)

A blog is an example of an asynchronous online communication tool. Blogs allow students to share ideas or reflections in social online community. They encourage interaction between the “blogger” and “readers” which provide learners with an opportunity to actively participate in the project. Readers of blogs have the ability to comment, provide feedback, and critique blog entries that have been posted.

The potential for teacher-to-student feedback within blogs provides learners with a supervised learning environment to ensure that the communication is on track, grammar and spelling is accurate and the content of the entries and comments are aligned with the subject matter being taught (Del Rosario, 2015) could also change the accurate after spelling to correct

and then say comments are accurately reflecting the subject matter.... The result of this integration provides instructors evidence of students' understanding of the subject matter. Feedback provided within the blog assists students with information and tools to improve communication and critical thinking (Hazari et al., 2013).

Digital Portfolio Integration

Digital portfolios are online repositories for professional and academic achievements. These online spaces, created by students, can be shared with peers, instructors, mentors, and potential employers. Digital portfolios are also used as an assessment tool for course-related projects. Students are able to link to related assignments and content which help the readers understand how their completed course work reflects an understanding of the subject matter (Roberts & Herrington, 2016). Students are given autonomy when creating their digital portfolios. This provides them with the opportunity to customize their design and to showcase accomplishments that provide evidence of meeting their learning goals (Roberts & Herrington, 2016).

Support and Development

Support systems are necessary for effective implementation of enhancements to face-to-face courses with asynchronous technologies, videos and digital portfolios. Training opportunities, technology use policies, technology infrastructure, and available support staff are required to maintain the integration of these tools (Newland & Byles, 2014). The availability of resources, including technology support and software training, is an essential part of integrating web-enhanced courses. Newland and Byles (2014) state that "a high level of support is required by most academics as they do not have high levels of confidence and expertise in using e-learning tools" (p. 321).

Social media venues must be systematically integrated into college-level courses in order to be successful in enhancing students' learning environment. Professional development sessions should be available to faculty interested in incorporating social media into their courses. These opportunities will provide instructors with the necessary information on how to use specific social media outlets, how to promote active learning in each of the tools, how students are utilizing emerging technologies and samples of social media integration best practices. As 21st century students are familiar with most social media platforms, instructors must be well versed in their various applications if they are interested in incorporating them into the academic environments (George et al., 2013).

Faculty and students alike need to be informed of the benefits of blogging before each party delves into utilizing the tool. Providing this information to students before they participate will build enthusiasm for active learning activities. Hazari et al. (2013) explain that blogs “can promote critical, creative, and associational thinking, as well as a potential for increased access and exposure to quality information and building community” (p. 106).

SUMMARY

Active learning environments for college students provide students with an enhanced learning experience. Web 2.0 technologies, incorporation of online videos, self-recorded video responses for discussion topic, asynchronous tools such as blogs, and digital portfolios are tools that can effectively enhance traditional face-to-face college-level courses. This integration of the aforementioned tools must be accompanied by faculty development sessions and technology support systems for both instructors and students.

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