China: Education 2.0 Tour-- Applications and Effects of Virtual Tour to International Communication in Educational Technology

Project Introduction

In the report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century - Learning, the treasure within (1996), learning to live together was coined as one of the four pillars of learning in the future. We stake our hopes for world peace and development on education, and information technology is highly expected to contribute to international communication in the field of education. The emergence of Web 2.0 especially brought us many excitements and innovative ideas. Defined as a platform (O'Reilly, 2005), Web 2.0 allows users control their own data, whether by creating, organizing, or sharing. The world has become exceptionally flat as we could never imagine (Friedman, 2005). Does this mean that we could bring educators in different corners of the world onto a virtual space and have them start dialogues and work together? We will answer this question, by our own actions and findings.

Our project China: Education 2.0 Tour is a planned tour to China for communication in educational technology in 2009, and information technologies such as interactive maps, weblog and multimedia tutorial are applied to facilitate the tour. The project was initiated for an attempt to integrate contemporary information technologies into the process of educational international communication, in hopes that information technologies could:

- Increase effectiveness and efficiency for international visit;
- Use virtual tour as an agent to promote technology applications in China;
- Use tools and visits to build interactions among citizens of China, US and other.

Project Framework

The project China: Education 2.0 Tour mainly consists of two parts:

- The actual tour will be approximately 14-day long in early 2009. Cities in China will be visited include Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Ningbo, Fenghua and Xi’an. School visits, scholar interviews and meetings will be arranged in major education agents in China for enhancing mutual understanding and motivating potential cooperation.

- The virtual tour will be launched from the beginning of March 2008 and be continued before, during and after the actual tour as needed. The virtual tour includes:
  - Tour maps enabled by Google Maps contain multimedia detailed itinerary, self-introduction from Chinese participants, overviews of technology application to education in different regions in China, sightseeing features, other contents interesting to perspective actual or virtual visitors.
  - Weblog enabled by Wordpress allows perspective participants to preview the tour and its related information, provide screencast tutorials for users to quickly learn the technology skills needed, allows the actual/virtual visitors and the hosts in China to have dialogues online.
Presentation Contents

In the proposed presentation, we will show:

- The contents and the structure of the actual and the virtual tour;
- What technological tools work best in U.S.- China communicational environment?
  Technology environmental analysis (physical, institutional and cultural) of the two counties and comparison between applications will be shown. Rubrics will be recommended for selecting applications for communication in a global environment. (e.g. Among many interactive maps applications, why we choose Google Maps?)
- How do we encourage and facilitate people on both sides to participate in the virtual tour? The participation includes 1) creating maps in Google Maps by themselves (Chinese side) for purpose of engaging the perspective visitors and providing meaningful information for further dialogues; 2) both sides participating in online discussions on Weblog as lasting and dynamic communications.
- The theoretical framework of how to apply theory of technology affordances (Conole & Dyke, 2004) into practices in our work with consideration of both positive and negative effects.
- Technical issues involved in implementing the project.

Reference


