Web 2.0 and Social Networking Activities for Classroom Settings

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the extent on how higher education educators adapt Web 2.0 technology as tools for learning in the classroom. Web 2.0 tools provide extensive collaboration opportunities and can also be used to create student-centered instruction. To answer many questions surrounding Web 2.0 technology in higher education, a study will be conducted with randomly selected educators in higher education on their use of social networking tools in the classroom, as well as how to provide students different opportunities to create and share their own knowledge, both independently and collaboratively.

Literary Framework

The Internet, being just one medium of correspondence for distance education, has various tools for use. These tools have evolved over time, from email to instant chatting and now, even voice or video chatting. And with the advent of more tools, the Internet has grown in use. “The migration of individuals, especially teenagers and young adults, onto the Internet has occurred in staggering proportions.” (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). In recent years, social networking has evolved as one of these tools. The social networking trend started with college students as the target audience. However, more recently, the growing population for these sites has been 35 and older. Two of these sites are Facebook and MySpace. Rosenfeld (2008) found the following: “With Facebook and MySpace having millions of registered users, social networking sites have quickly become a ubiquitous part of our culture. These sites provide ways for users to interact in online communities using blogs, discussion groups, e-mail, video and audio, and file sharing.”

The idea is that many of these social networks are considered a common source for communication and relation to one another. As Mika (2005) stated, “…they provide a central point of access and bring structure in the process of personal information sharing and online socialization.” Often when individuals share information, it relates to a specific group or hobby or even those who have attended the same institution. While social networking has become a main platform for communication on the Internet, very little research has been done on whether it is in all actuality a true social environment.

Research Question

With the advent of social networking in higher education, how are these social networks being used and are they having positive or negative influences on the higher education classroom?

Methodology

In an effort to better understand the uses of social networking in the classroom, a survey will be conducted among faculty in higher education institutions who are actively involved in technological use within the classroom. To conduct the survey, a web-based survey tool will be utilized and the survey sent to random faculty. Faculty will be recruited using a snowballing technique and through contacts with the New Media Consortium, Facebook groups, and contacts who are involved in distance and blended learning initiatives at the higher education level.

Analysis

The qualitative and quantitative results will be analyzed and summarized. Conclusions will be made after thorough analysis. From this data, a better understanding may be drawn to see if social networking is a viable tool within the higher education classroom.