Creating Facebook Communities of Practice: A Content Analysis

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Abstract: There have been a few recent studies investigating the possible uses and trends of Facebook in academic contexts (Ellison et al., 2007; Nazir et al., 2008; Pempek & Yermolayeva, 2009; Schwartz, 2009; Roblyer et al. 2010). However, none of them focused on the use of Facebook in individual classrooms. This study is a content analysis of two Facebook classroom groups. Fifty community college students, enrolled into two sections of Electronic Communication Applications course, were asked to post one weekly status update as part of classroom experience. After the first week of required posts, students became increasingly more active while still posting academic-related updates. Students were reminding each other of upcoming deadlines, discussed requirements for various projects, shared ideas, and even supported struggling classmates by posting positive comments. By the end of the semester, both Facebook groups have essentially become virtual communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). The transformation process as well as content of status updates posted throughout the semester is analyzed and discussed in this paper.