Unleashing Innovation: Social Networking in 21st Century Education

Shari McCurdy Smith
University of Illinois at Springfield
USA
mccurdy.shari@uis.edu

Kathleen Ives, D.M.
Sloan Consortium
USA
kathleen.ives@sloan-c.org

Abstract: A student in Georgia and a student in Illinois are in the same online education class. They have the same teacher, the same curriculum, and the same peers. From those connections, they can have multiple layers of input and learning. What was always an unspoken truth of on-campus classrooms, that education is an individual experience, is now up for debate. When everything about the way we learn is being turned on its ear, does it not follow it is also time to rethink how we teach?

Introduction

Whether we admit it or not, privacy, intellectual property, and collaboration norms are being called into question due to the way information is stored, accessed, and used. Digital information is everywhere and no longer needs even the entry-point of a keyboard. The future has come to our classrooms in a rush of easy access and shared content. In addition, the world grows more collaborative every day. Calit2 (http://www.calit2.net) designs spaces purposely to support collaboration between technologist and scientist. University marketing meetings number up to forty people. Your pictures or experiences can become part of anyone’s web space. Each classroom experience includes team activities. And, without design, students are forcing educators to accept linked, networked, and collaborative spaces as the preferred arena for work as well as play. These popular practices coupling easily accessible content/knowledge with collaborative spaces are having a profound affect on the normally individual and rigid world of educational assessment and what it means to learn.

Into this world, educators are trying to inject standards, criteria, and values—some valid, and yes, some, perhaps, hopelessly under appreciated or undesired. Many pioneering educators have come to the wide gap in the road where they must define what to control, where public comment ends and privacy begins, what is most critical to the development of intellectual thought in their discipline, and what can be shaped through experience and training. Many more will come to that gap soon.

How do we assess collaboration, networks, and shared spaces? Is assessment in our emerging networked society meeting today’s need? What do we risk as we open our classroom structure? This session will present best practices in the use of social networking tools as they relate to online instruction, from a nation-wide audience of online instructors. We will demo social networking tools from a faculty perspective, get you started, and discuss best practices in implementing social networking to achieve a productive change.

Reference