Obstacles and Difficulties Encountered Using Wikis at a Japanese University

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Wikis are now widely recognized to be an excellent educational resource--for more effective student learning through group collaboration, for improving motivation, for promoting knowledge sharing, and for empowering students with the responsibility for their own learning. Less widely addressed are the perceived difficulties and potential obstacles that may arise from incorporating wikis into the learning environment.

Beyond the successes, this presentation examines the obstacles and difficulties to effective learning encountered during the implementation of a wiki project recently carried out at a mid-sized suburban university in Japan. In this project, a wiki host was used to provide multiple wiki websites for students working in groups in a research-oriented program, with the goal of improving effective learning by allowing students to engage in collaborative activities. The obstacles and difficulties encountered--technological, pedagogical, and affective--in the introduction and use of wikis in this program, as both observed by the instructor as well as reported by the students in post-course questionnaires and interviews, are discussed. In addition to the future use of wikis at the project university, the insights provided should also be of benefit to attendees considering the implementation of wikis in their own programs and institutions.