Title: Readable/Writable Web use in Early Childhood Teacher Education

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This qualitative, exploratory study investigates how students in an early childhood teacher education program use the readable/writable Web to build common resource pools (CRPs) (Ostrom, 2000). CRPs are sites or destinations where individuals openly share resources for both collaborative and individual activities/products. As the web extends the classroom beyond the traditional “four walls”, students become the point in the network where learning pathways intersect (a node), connecting to other student-nodes in a larger network of activity. Each network then contains at least two nodes which are linked to shared resources, creating CRPs. As Siemens (2006) states “The learning is the network”, using Web 2.0 technologies results in learning driven by the activity of the individual within a social learning network.

The course selected for this study was Teaching Social Science to Young Children, with data gathered in Fall, 2011. This study included two separate sections: one was composed of pre-service birth to grade three teachers, the second of service birth to five teachers. Both sections requested students learn a new “fact” about immigration and young children. In the first step, they found something new about the culture of a child. For example if they focused on Hispanic immigration, they selected one aspect of Hispanic culture which interested them, and then they found something new about the selected aspect using the Web 2.0. Following their initial exploration, they then shared the new information or “fact” to their classmates using a
class blog. In addition to sharing their individual facts, they read and reacted to the findings of others. The students were then responsible for finding a web resource on the same topic or one brought up by a peer in the class blog. Again the students read what others posted on the blog and reacted to the findings of others. At the end of the assignment, students were asked to reflect in writing on their learning through the following questions:

1) *How* did the finding of the others contribute to what you knew about immigration?

2) *What* (open ended questions) was *most helpful* to your learning about immigration:
   doing your own research, the first blog sharing, or the second blog sharing...*How was each helpful?*

3) If you were to learn new facts about immigration using Web 2.0, how would you organize this learning?

4) What are pros and cons about the way this assignment helped your learning?

Results of the questions will be analyzed qualitatively for evidence of connections to the learning network and other aspects of socially connected learning (i.e. use of hyperlinks or other evidence of connection points).

We believe that this exploratory study is important to understand how pre-service and service teachers may or may not be building CRPs. As the Web 2.0 expands in to early childhood classrooms, teacher education programs need to prepare teachers to understand and use Web 2.0 tools. If this preparation is not successful, the field of early childhood will be left behind the rest of education.
References
