

A STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BLOG IN LEARNING PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

Background: *Information Technology has provided immediacy to education. A blog - portmanteau of the term web log. A weblog is a Website that consists of a series of entries arranged in reverse chronological order, often updated on frequently with new information about particular topics. The information can be written by the site owner, gleaned from other Websites or other sources, or contributed by users. Blogs can be a place where students reflect on readings, much as analog journaling was used as a pedagogical tool in the past.* **Objective:** *This study was designed to identify the effectiveness of blog, as a part of their education experience in the process of learning and interacting with their co-students.* **Method:** *In the present study, samples of 100 college students were drawn from Hotel Management discipline. They were administered 20-items of usage of Blog Scale. The collected data were statistically analyzed by using mean, standard deviation and t – test.* **Results:** *The study indicated that female and male students have significant effectiveness of BLOG usage in their learning process. Recently, blogs have begun to emerge as a useful type of educational technology.* **Conclusion :** *Blogs can be effective educational technology to which will facilitate learning for Gen. Y in this constantly changing scenario.*

Key Words: *Information Technology, Learning, Blog*

INTRODUCTION

According to a few research project lead by Lenhart et al. (2010), 93% of teens (ages 13-17) use the internet and 73% of teens actively use social networking sites. By embracing a technology with which students are so comfortable, learning can become more student-centered. Halic et al, 2010 claimed that the popularity of blogs among young people has made them tempting to educators seeking to integrate computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools at university level. These tools are seen as having the potential for enhancing student engagement and providing an environment for collaboration and creation of knowledge.

Student blogging can be a way to achieve several learning outcomes. Blogs can be used to improve student writing, especially for developing skill in analysis and critique. The blog format is particularly useful for shorter, less formal, assignments, which may offer an advantage over paper submissions. Blogs provide a means for student response to or discussion of outside-of-class readings that are not adequately covered during class.

There is ever-greater interest in the use of web technologies such as blogs in higher education (Blázquez and Calvo, 2002). Course blogs are often thought of as a way to provide an authentic learning experience. Among all other platforms being used as a learning tool, blogs are slowly gaining popularity as more and more teachers are introducing blogging in classroom. Ellison and Wu (2008) determined students' perceived benefits of blogging using surveys. Blogs are one of the rising technologies often used by educators to facilitate communication and collaboration among students (Divitini et al, 2005). It is a form of personalized online media or a personal online journal that introduces oneself to others, allows individuals to interact, and shares personal thoughts, information, pictures, movies, activities, and logs in a convenient and easy way. Kelly(2009) notes that blogging encourages higher levels of reasoning because the “focus is not necessarily on the content of the blog, but more on the process of constructing and evaluating knowledge helping us reach the sometimes elusive upper levels – analyzing, evaluating, and creating – of Bloom’s Taxonomy” .

Research suggests that blogs share the following features like Individual ownership, Hyperlinked post structure, Updates displayed in reverse chronological order, and Archival of postings.

INDIVIDUAL OWNERSHIP:

Bartlett-Bragg (2003) suggested that individual ownership is one of the most important features of blogs. In essence, the individual owns the blog. The individual is responsible for the blog, both in terms of publishing the blog content, moderating the contents in the comments provided by readers, deciding the rights of the readers (for example, the rights to read his blog as well as to post comments), and customizing the look and feel of the blog (Baggetun and Wasson, 2006; Downes, 2004).

HYPERLINKED POST STRUCTURE:

Blog technology allows an individual to create hypertext links to reference materials outside the individual's site. Given the highly individualized nature of blogs, the selection of links would therefore be at the discretion of the blogger, who may link to reference materials anywhere on the web; or for that matter, choose not to link (Herring et al., 2005). Pacquet (2002) proposed that the presence of links may be taken as one of the distinguishing feature of blogs as opposed to online diaries.

UPDATES DISPLAYED IN REVERSE CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER:

A typical blog captures the latest posting at the top of the page. Older posts (hence older contents) appear further down the latest post. Such a reverse chronological order of displays in the updates is another feature of blogs. This systematic reverse chronological display of the postings allows the individuals to access his latest posting immediately when he logs on to his blog.

ARCHIVAL OF POSTINGS:

Blogs provide for the auto-archiving of older posts. Newer posts are reflected on the top of the blog. This also means that theoretically over time, the blog will grow indeterminately. In practice, this is not so as the system only captures a certain fixed number of recent posts on the site and that older posts are no longer shown. Older posts are archived and may be accessed elsewhere on the site by default via a permanent hyperlink or permalink (Pacquet, 2002).

In the present study an attempt was made to investigate the effectiveness of BLOG usage in the learning process. The objectives of the study were:

1. To develop an achievement test in the subject communication based on the blog material.
2. To find out the effectiveness of blog in learning process.

METHODOLOGY

The experimental design has been used in this study, to study the effectiveness of usage of blog. Pre-test, Post-test, equivalent group design was adopted. The students of experimental group were taught through blog technique. The control group was taught through conventional method only.

The sample of the study consisted of two intact classroom groups of 32 students who were randomly drawn from Institute of Hotel Management College, Chennai. One of the groups was treated as the experimental group in which blog was used and the other as the control group in which existing method of teaching was used.

The following tools were used for treatment in the equivalent and control groups. Achievement test for the subject communication was constructed. Both reliability and validity were established by the investigator for the purpose of the study.

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample with reference to the variables taken for the study. In the differential analysis, the significance of difference between group were studied using 't' test.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study are presented herewith:

It can be seen from the Table 1 that mean of experimental group is significantly greater than the mean of the control group. It indicates that the students of the experimental group show positive effect in usage of Blog than the students of control group.

The calculated value of 't' is less than the table value of 't' at any level of significance. It is concluded that the control and experimental group students do not differ in their achievement in the pre-test. The Table 2 indicates that the achievement of the students in usage of blog in the two groups were almost same in the pre-test.

Table 1: Pre-Test and Post-Test Score Analysis (Both Groups)

Groups	N	Pre-test		Post-test	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
Control Group	32	42.58	12.22	58.92	6.96
Experimental Group	32	42.26	11.50	91.20	4.86

Table 2: Test of Significance of the difference between the Mean Achievement Scores of Experimental and Control Group in Pre-Test.

GROUPS	N	Mean	S. D	MD	S.E	't' - value
Control Group	32	42.58	12.22	0.32	2.9664	0.1074
Experimental Group	32	42.26	11.50			

Table 3: Test of Significance of the difference between the Mean Achievement Scores of Experimental and Control Group in Post-Test.

GROUP	N	Mean	S. D	MD	S.E	't' - value
Control Group	32	58.92	6.96	32.38	1.5006	21.5114**
Experimental Group	32	91.20	4.86			

** Significant at 0.01 level

Table 3 indicates that the mean difference is high and the obtained 't' value is higher than the tabular value 2.66 at 0.01 level. Hence the mean difference is highly significant. It is inferred that the experimental group students have more effect in the usage of Blog than the control group students.

The result of the study indicated that irrespective of different demographic variables of the respondents, all the samples fall under "High" degree of effectiveness in Blog usage. The experimental and control group students who learnt through blog technique and conventional method respectively, differ in their

achievement at 0.01 level of significance. The experimental group who learnt through blog technique is at the highest level than the control group. The result of the present study is in confirmation with the study of (Kerawalla et al., 2009). Blogs offer students the opportunity to surface their ideas in a social plane. The ability to commence on these ideas enables individuals to participate in social construction of knowledge. Scaffolding of this process carried out through commenting can further enhance learning. Blogging supports the internationalization of knowledge by allowing students to look back at their archived posts and look back on what they have written and the comments provided by their peers or teacher. Overall, the study indicated that the students of Hotel Management with usage of blog are more effective in the course work assigned to them. The finding is consistent with the findings of other studies that focused on perceptions of blogs such as Shoffner (2006), Wang et al, (2006), Kuzu (2007), Demirel et al, (2008), and Yang (2009). It was evident that participants in all these studies had positive views toward the use of blogs as a learning tool.

CONCLUSION

Blogs are an effective and efficient method of allowing students to access information as it is needed and to make connections between explicit knowledge from textbooks and tacit knowledge gained as students see how others can and are using the knowledge being shared. Blogs also introduce students to online learning communities so they can access and evaluate information, and construct new learning paradigms for themselves. Blogs help to create connections that were previously very difficult. It provides new channels of information and knowledge. It promotes the use of writing habits, reading habits and the use of technology. Highly motivating to students, especially those who otherwise might not become participants in classrooms. This is in line with Black (2005) that “Unlike traditional teaching where the instructor or a few students may dominate the discussion, the blog allows all voices to be heard. Even those students who may be intimidated by speaking in front of their peers, or those who need more time to respond are easily able to express their thoughts more freely and descriptively”.

Blogs are effective forums for collaboration and discussion. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) suggested that this could subsequently help build strong ties among students in order to motivate them to contribute their opinions or comments. Educators may also consider giving students proper guidance on how to provide critical and appropriate feedback (Ellison & Wu, 2008). According to Berge and Collins (1995), text-based communications have the power to enhance interactions through removing and diminishing barriers of participation such as lacking communication skills, cultural differences, and shyness. Interaction is a powerful facilitator for learning, and there is a relationship between the amount of interaction students have with course content and their performance. More specifically, interaction serves as a purpose of increasing participation & motivation, developing communication, receiving feedback, enhancing elaboration & retention, supporting learner, discovery & exploration,

clarifying misunderstanding, and achieving closure (Wagner, 1997). Blogs involve all of the above functions and characteristics. Finally, effectively modeling ways to use blogs as a learning tool is a useful skill for our students to have as they embark on their journey of life-long learning. This study demonstrated that blogs can be effective educational technology. Thus the study suggests that blogging facilitated and contributed to their learning.

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