

Understanding how Objectives Transform into Outcomes: Activity Theory and its use in Analyzing Web 2.0 Assignments in an Information Literacy Instruction Course

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Abstract

Today in our schools and universities there is disconnect between education and technology (Collins & Halverson, 2009). Technology grants are given out and computers are set up, but simply placing computers in a school is not enough. Issues related to educational technology implementation and teacher training must also be discussed and rectified in order for education and technology to align. Technology education is not only about knowing how to use the technologies, but also needs to be rooted in outcomes and sound pedagogy (Roland, 2010). Fishman and Pinkard (2001) put it this way, “The problem, in short, is that schools make technology plans without carefully planning for how technology will be used!” (p.63).

This case study takes place in a Master’s course on information literacy instruction. The purpose of this study is to (1) analyze how students use Web 2.0 tools for specific assignments and (2) analyze how these Web 2.0 activities shape student perceptions about (a) Web 2.0 use in education and information literacy instruction and (b) the role of technology in information literacy instruction.

In many studies on technology, emphasis has been put on whether students learn, but when using these technologies to teach future educators it is also important to look at how these tools are used and if they found them useful. Only then will they use them in their own classrooms and be open to new technologies as they progress in their careers. Therefore, more specific questions that stem out of my research statement include: What are the students’ perceptions of these Web 2.0 tools? Do they think they are useful for their own learning? Do they think they would be useful for their own teaching? Do these views change as the semester progresses? What features do they like the best? Which ones do they dislike? What issues are raised when they discuss Web 2.0 activities? How do they see them being used in information literacy? Do they see these as useful tools for instruction? How are they using these tools?

This study is currently in the final analysis and writing stage. A qualitative approach was used for data collection and analysis. The course being studied was done online which had an impact on the types of methods that were used for data collection. Observations are being done on chats, discussion

postings, and emails. Students used a variety of Web 2.0 tools during the semester and their use of these tools was observed as well. Documents that were analyzed include assignments and papers as well as course resources such as the syllabus, readings, and lectures. Surveys include a pre-survey given out the first week of class and a post-survey during the last week of class. Both surveys had open-ended questions that relate to Web 2.0, education, and information literacy.

For this study the educational theory of constructivism and its adherence to reflection, active learning, and social interaction are being used to guide the research (Vygotsky, 1978). Activity Theory (Engeström, Meirittinen, & Punamäki, 1999; Nardi, 1996) was used to help with data analysis and interpretation. The final product will be a case study with rich, thick descriptions of the activities and perceptions of the participants in order to provide insight into how library students use Web 2.0 and what they think about technology’s role in education and information literacy.

References

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