



Digital Literacy Curriculum for Student Engagement in IBPYP Classrooms using Qualitative Approach

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ABSTRACT

There is a paradigm shift among the digital learners of 21st century due to the rapid increase in the usage of gadgets, such as computers, mobile phones, social networking sites, blogs and etc. Among International Baccalaureate teachers today, use of gadgets is widely used to engage their students and in the process, try to use technology tools such as Web 2.0 for collaborative projects, connecting participants beyond the traditional classrooms. This paper explores on digital literacy in the context of IB World School students learning engagement, using technology. As such, an implementation of Wikispaces Classroom for 6 weeks in an Information Technology Communication and Visual Arts lesson was used to capture their digital literacy in a Grade 5 classroom. The outcome of the research encapsulates the students' perceptions towards their new learning experience through Web tools: Wikispaces Classroom for Visual Arts. As a result, student's engagement in learning Visual Arts has increased and learning has generated knowledge in Visual Arts and other subject areas. This paper recommends digital literacy tools engage students in learning, which impact curriculum design and planning for future.

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Introduction

Every generation differs from the past. This is true today with the rapid dissemination of new technologies. Younger students of today have grown up with new technologies. "Through the mixing and matching of tools at hands; mobile phones, computers, and tablets used for different purposes and extension to social media in creative new ways, it enables us to do what is required, and what is intended" (Jones & Hafner 2012, p16). Jones & Hafner (2012) defined 'Digital literacy' as the practices of communicating, relating, thinking and being associated with the digital media. In the 21st century learning, students reach out to the Web to learn from social media to create their own learning experiences (Blossom 2009, p235). In accordance with the International Baccalaureate (IB), the digital literacies are practiced through the Information Communication Technology (ICT) in the Primary Years Programme (PYP) to provide opportunity for students to investigate, create, communicate, collaborate, organise and be responsible for their own learning and actions (IBO 2011). They also assert the emphasis of unique learning approaches developed to prepare students for a lifetime of learning. Thus, the paradigm shift among the digital learners shows the needs to examine the pedagogical principles and technologies in classroom routines.

Barrette et al. (2012) argued to the extent of children making connections between their experiences of the Arts in and beyond school, hence providing the platform for creativity thought and activity. In a regular Visual art lesson, students try to create what is required by the teacher, and to meet the teacher's expectation. The traditional approach, combined with the expectations of the students about their artistic skills, sometimes creates frustration in the students as

they described their art work as "suck". As a result, students sometimes show a lack of enthusiasm, engagement and confidence in learning Visual Arts. In the perspective of an art educator, the biggest challenge is to cultivate the interest of students, as well as their engagement in learning Visual Arts. Nevertheless, there is a need for innovative approaches of student's artistic skills through a traditional approach using painting, sculpting, drawing and other artistic skills. This research paper will emphasize on the processes of participants' learning and creating artwork, which will be examined through the participant's journals and their self-reflection notes, as well as their discussions in the Wikispaces Classroom forums.

Background

Wikispaces Classroom is a social writing platform for education that is easily accessible to create a classroom workspace. Wikispaces Classroom was launched in 2005 and has grown to support 14 million members and over 35 million monthly visitors. Wikispaces Classroom provides a simple structure that allows creation of projects, define teams, assign students and manage them all through successful completion of their projects. Starting from pre-built templates, or a blank slate, students can work in private groups until their work is due. The creator of the individual Wikispaces Classroom has the control of setting the users who are in the group for privacy and protection. Hence, the ethical aspect of participants in the research is considered and privacy is assured. The collaborative nature of Wikis enables users to enact knowledge building with and for others, focusing on the community rather than individual learner. On the other hand, Visual Art teachers are encouraged to conduct guided conversations about selected works of art with students, using

strategies meant to increase their observation and critical thinking skills. Engagement in learning Arts when discussed with 'student-centred learning', offer students to think creatively through 'Arts and Ideas' (Andrews, 2010), and able to 'think for themselves' rather than scoring well in tests. Antoniou & Hickman (2012) discussed that educational practices to facilitate children's engagement in art activities of creation and evaluation should be meaningful, enjoyable and useful for them as individuals. Arts Ed Research (Charleroy 2012) reviewed the use of reflection and critical thinking activities into Arts instruction; for example, Through this platform, teachers and students can communicate and work on writing projects alone or in teams. Thus, this research study uses an intervention with use of digital literacy (Wikispaces Classroom) to enhance the process of creating Arts in the classroom.

Problem Statement

IB PYP encourages the use of visual art learning for critical thinking reflection among the students. This is evident from IBO (2009b) guide which states, learning about and through arts is fundamental to the development of the whole child, promoting creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and social interactions. At the same time, In accordance with the International Baccalaureate (IB), the digital literacies are practiced through the Information Communication Technology (ICT) in the Primary Years Programme (PYP) to provide opportunity for students to investigate, create, communicate, collaborate, organize and be responsible for their own learning and actions (IBO 2011). As such, there is a need to see if the information technology contributes towards the student's active learning with respect to visual arts.

Research Questions

RQ

- 1) How do Web tools enhance students' active learning and participation using Wikispaces?
- 2) How do Web tools enhance students' active learning and participation to produce artistic works?
- 3) In what ways do student find the use of Information technology for online arts learning?

Literature Review

'Digital Native' is a term coined by U.S. author Prensky (2001) to represent today's students who grew up with new technology, also known as N-[for Net]-gen or D-[for digital]-gen. The 'digital immigrant' is from the older generation who tries to learn to adapt to technology (Ros cited in Zur & Zur, 2011). Most digital natives are tech-savvy who were born around technology. Discovering new ways to educate the digital natives has become a new challenge to many teachers who are digital immigrants. Hence, teachers are always searching for new pedagogies and strategies to engage these learners.

An alternative theory is advanced by Blossom (2009) who discussed the concept of the 'content nation', which is used to express a large and significant movement of people using publishing tools to reach the world. Current debates of Prensky (Joy 2012) believes a "networked planet" is a sign that developing nations will soon close the digital divide between the 'natives' and the 'immigrant'. Hence, technology will be used everywhere by anyone in the planet near future.

Furthermore, social media is powering many education efforts (Blossom 2009) for student-centred learning (Atkinson & Swaggerty 2011); creating and consuming for Arts education (Buffington 2008a); students see the use of relevancy-based digital tools, content and resources as a key

to driving learning productivity, not just about engaging students in learning (Speak Up 2009). In addition, student's engagement in learning may depend on the activities in school; resulting educators continuously seek new strategies and pedagogies to engage students learning in and beyond classrooms.

On the other hand, Global classroom project (Frazier & Graffin 2011) creates an online collaborative spaces and a global network, helping teachers and students around the world to explore new ways to connect, share, learn and collaborate globally. They also asserted over 300 K-12 from 35 countries around the world; and have hosted over a dozen global by the users. It is evident that the wide spread of Web 2.0 technologies in Arts education indicate there is a need of change in teaching Arts in the modern world. Nevertheless, the need of interaction and collaboration among the students when learning Arts plays an important role.

Finally, of all the digital tools currently available, it is probably fair to say that Wikispaces Classroom is the most suitable tool for online collaboration learning. Wikispaces Classroom builds on the editing and collaboration features of Wikispaces and adds our new social newsfeed, real-time formative assessment, a new mobile experience including an iPad app, a stream-lined theme, a more education-focused feature set. (Wikispaces, 2013) Wikispaces (2013) is commonly used for class websites, assignments, class projects, portfolios, parent communication, professional development, independent study, and much more. In addition, one of the many features on Wikispaces Classroom allows users to share and edit information collectively. Wikipedia, as a social media is powering many education efforts around the world today, enabling students to collaborate on a studying subject and reporting their findings. The collaborative nature of Wikis enables users to enact knowledge building with and for others, focusing on the community rather than individual learner. This seems to contradict with Cole's (2008) study which has shown a failed experiment of Wiki technology to support engagement in education with a third year undergraduate module. The experiment failed due to the lack of instructional scaffolding and instruction hand-out to students, resulting some of those students' encountered technical difficulties, or lack self-confidence. The use of Web 2.0 with collaborative-knowledge building appears to develop deeper understanding for students at a higher education level, leaving a gap of study for the primary year's context. Thus, this paper extends the opportunities of exploring Wikispaces Classroom in a Primary Years Visual Arts classroom.

Source of data

In order to analyse the data, after 6 weeks of Wikispaces Classroom implementation in the Visual Arts classroom, a focus group interview was conducted with a series of questions. Observation, artefacts & screen shots of Wikispaces Classroom discussions were also used to gather data. Firstly, the focus group interview was transcribed, then it is thematised into a table. To triangulate the data, the data is then compared with the consistency of the observation to the thematised data in order to check on the non-verbal cues, grasp how participants communicate with each other, and how much time is spent on various activities. Lastly, the common themes are drawn from comments from the forum discussion, students' journals and drawings.

Methodology

Firstly, this research uses a Qualitative approach which was conducted in an IB World School in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia with a total number of 17 students age 10-11 years

old. The research started with the implementation of the digital literacy curriculum in a Grade 5 Visual Arts classroom using Wikispaces Classroom for six weeks. Visual Art lessons were conducted twice a week, duration of each session is 1 hour 20 minutes. Data was gathered through a focus group interview and forum discussions in the Wikispaces Classroom. In addition, documents of participants' work and observations were used to complement the themes which sought to illustrate the ways participants described their new learning experience through Wikispaces Classroom.

Findings & Discussions

Based on the Research question common themes emerged from the interview, observations, artefacts and Wikispaces Classroom forum discussions. The following are the common themes that emerged from the observations and interviews based on Q1 How do Web tools enhance students' active learning and participation, Q2 How do Web tools enhance students' active learning and participation to produce artistic works, Q3 In what ways do student use the Information Technology for online arts learning?

a) Wikispaces Classroom creates a **new learning environment** for participants. It appears to show that Wikispaces Classroom allows participants to scaffold their learning based on prior knowledge.

"I can post questions to inquire..." [1KQ1]

"Training, we learn to draw, because the more we practice drawing, for example a fighting scene. I can check on the videos to improve on the expression, for example happy, angry, sad..." [3AQ2]

Thus, the 'sense of community' increases the student's capacity for processing the new material, with improved achievement being the learning outcome (Malhiwsky 2010).

b) Wikispaces Classroom as a space for better **communication** with collaboration. The Web tool is easily accessible anywhere, anytime, its availability made the platform a communication tool for users and non-users. Wikispaces Classroom is like Social networking tool for chatting and discussions similar to the Facebook and Webcam. Internet language such as jargons, abbreviations and emoticons frequently used by participants.

"Something like Facebook, can also post videos related to your questions, and also discuss on your questions posted to share new ideas" [2FQ1]

":) :) :) >:(" [5IQ3]

"Once I have more ideas, I can use the ideas my friends given me, to share with others" [19CQ3]

"If I need to discuss after school, my friends stay far away, I can't see them face to face, and I can communicate with them using these technology." [10CQ1]

c) **Web tools are used as a tool to enhance active engagement** through the use of an avatar for active participation and YouTube videos sharing. The participants felt emotionally engaged with the frequent use of avatar in their profiles. Besides that, the interaction of participants showed that they used the discussion forum for learning.

"I like Sharing videos – all the videos, and what people said" [2VQ3]

"I am interested in videos that other people posted." [4VQ3]

"Some other people post it, and I don't have to search for it myself." [5VQ3]

"I'm so going to change my avatar." [2AQ3]

"I am interested in videos that other people posted" [4AQ3]

"I like to type in discussion" [23CQ3]

"I learn my drawings from the shared videos" [2RQ3]

"Once I have more ideas, I can use the ideas my friends given me, to share with others" [17CQ3]

The qualitative data from the above discussion evidently explain that the implementation of Wikispaces Classroom in Visual Arts class in this context shows positive signs of student engagement. There are evidences of frequent use of web tools such as video sharing, Avatar, forum discussions used by the students for communication and to produce artwork. The students actively participated in the forum discussions and indicated learning Arts skills from the 'how to' videos shared by other peers, which has also helped participants improve on their Arts skills and generated more inquiries for learning. In addition, YouTube allowed them to comment or post videos, students can use it to inquire about their learning for a particular unit. Hence, it can be concluded that Wikispaces Classroom is another platform to gain new knowledge, apart from arts concepts to enhance students' active participation and engagement in an online learning environment.

Conclusion

The potential of Web 2.0 in Arts education is extended and encourages collaboration, creation and discussion, thus benefiting the teaching and learning of Visual Arts. It creates a new online learning environment which allows students to participate in their learning in a sense of community. Wikispaces has become a communication platform for students to share new ideas, discuss learning online, offline, without being face to face 24/7. As a conclusion, Wikispaces is used as an online tool for active engagement in learning which allows video sharing, discussions and collaboration. Generally, schools who venture into technology may integrate Web 2.0 into the curriculum, rather than treating technology as an add-on. Hence, schools, organizations and stake holders can look into restructuring the policies into implementing Wikispaces Classroom into the curriculum.

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