



Technology Integration in Higher Education in Kurdistan, Iraq: a Wiki Case Study

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Abstract

As a result of a partnership between the University of Cincinnati, USA, and Salahaddin University – Hawler, Kurdistan, Iraq, technology integration strategies are being explored at Salahaddin University. The partnership has explored ways that technology can address the specific instructional issues of overcrowded classrooms, student motivation, and limited technology available to students on campus. Salahaddin University does not have a campus-based solution for e-learning, Students do not have access to a computer lab at the university. There is only a small library that provides wireless Internet for the teachers and students who have laptop computers. It is estimated that only about half of the students at the university have computers and access to the Internet.

One successful project that has resulted from the technology integration discussions between the two universities is a student moderated wiki organized by one professor in the English language undergraduate program. The wiki was designed to be an informal workspace where students could practice their English language writing skills, review content in the course, and ask questions of each other and of the professor. An added goal for the wiki was to promote positive faculty-student relationships. This qualitative case study analyzed the text of the wiki and student and instructor feedback on the project. Due to limitations in computer access, the wiki was optional for students, but they were awarded extra credit for participation. Sixty-five out of 130 students joined the wiki and about 20 of them were active participants in the wiki. The wiki workspace began with only two instructor-moderated pages, but over the course of a year grew to over 11 pages, all of which are now student-moderated. This increased ownership by students led to increased interest and participation in the wiki. Although the instructor no longer teaches these students, some of them are still very active in the workspace. The most active pages in the workspace were the grammatical terms, questions & answers, and jokes pages. Students who participated in the workspace generally did better in the midterm and final exams than those who did not participate in the wiki. The wiki also improved faculty/student communication, especially for students who were hesitant to ask questions or participate during the face-to-face class periods. Recommendations resulting from this project include: 1) making the Salahaddin University website more interactive through incorporating wikis and blogs for pedagogical purposes, and 2) providing a place within each college campus, where students and instructors can have access to computers and the Internet so that instructors can incorporate more web-based pedagogy into their syllabi.