

Chapter 23

The Portuguese School of Macao, China: A Traditional/Web 2.0 Assessment Facing Different Learning Styles

Zelia Baptista

University of Saint Joseph, China

João Negreiros

University of Saint Joseph, China

ABSTRACT

Technology is fundamental to the youth culture of today and high schools need to integrate it into live classes. This research hopes to provide a better understanding of the present learner styles and the technology impact towards enhancing and enriching the conventional learning process. Hence, the central focus of this writing is based on the four Index Learner Styles (Active VS Reflective, Sensing VS Intuitive, Visual VS Verbal, Sequential VS Global) of Felder and Soloman (1993, 2011) and on the teaching strategies impact that integrates technology (online lessons, blending learning topics, and collaboration software use) as a vehicle in the differentiation of the traditional learning curriculum. The field of experiment is the Portuguese language subject of the 8th grade students at the Portuguese School of Macau, China. One online survey and four tests (two for each class) are carried out to check whether the e-Learning perspective will benefit student learning in this new surrounded generation of mobile devices. Still, the main purpose relies on the learning style identification of high school scholars and to raise awareness of those personal characteristics to facilitate future development on personal learning strategies. Some other related topics are also highlighted such as Web 1.0 to Web 4.0 evolution and learning distance topics.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Net changes everything (Ellison, 1999). This means new mass Internet media of news and entertainment channels, synchronous tools of video/audio teleconferencing, autonomous agents and database assisted learning. According to Rosen (2006), in every 10 years comes a new twist: The 70's brought mainframes, the personal computer came on the 80s, the 90s created the WWW while the first decade of the 21st century ends up on the Web 2.0. Following the same line, the 2011-2020 time-period will bring the Web 3.0. According to Dawley (2007), Web 1.0 was just for reading and sending e-mails. With Web 2.0, it gave the users the free choice to interact or collaborate with each other in a social media dialogue as creators of user-generated content (prosumer) in a virtual community (social networking, blogs, wikis, or video-sharing sites). Under this e-Learning context, WebCT[®], Blackboard[®] and Moodle[®] already allows content creation, online file exchange and messaging system, multi-channel communication, whiteboards, on-line testing and grading book.

By definition, a learning object is a digital and Web-based resource that can be used and re-used to support knowledge acquiring, such as the introductory programming subject of the London Metropolitan University (www.londonmet.ac.uk/ltri/learningobjects/) where the present code seeks to engage with the learner through attractive use of visualisation. Certainly, this may turn out a quite useful tool for the computer programming teaching.

However, one of the biggest disadvantages of asynchronous courses is related to the high dropout rate. Moore and Kearsley (2005) found that 30% to 50% of students left courses in the recent past. On the other hand, due to the high maintenance costs of universities, for Peter Drucker (1998), they are becoming unsustainable without improvements in terms of digital content and quality of education. The introduction of courses online will achieve them with only a fraction of the cost

(Drucker 1998). Michael Zastrocky, in a survey conducted in March 2008 on the factors motivation for e-Learning platforms, found that students who were enrolled on online courses rated with four on a one-to-five scale. In 2009, students from the University of Hong Kong had access to a variety of study materials (which explores Wikis, blogs, and social networks) with frequently updated and reflection subjects throughout the semester participation. In the end, three other conclusions where drew by Churchill (2009): 79% of students felt that they learned quite a lot during the course; 83% of students enjoy the use of blogs to facilitate and contribute to the learning process; 92% of the students confirmed that due to blogs, the professor become more supportive than traditional courses.

According to a survey conducted by Becta (2008), 74% of two thousand and six hundred students from a universe of twenty-seven schools, had accounts in social networks. As well, professors prefer email (asynchronous) while students prefer to use Instant Messenger (synchronous). Moreover, in a data sample of one hundred and eighty students, another research conducted by Webster University in order to assess the advantages experienced of online courses, Tamashiro (2002) obtained the following advantages/disadvantages results given by Table 1.

Certainly, for workers within school courses, a hybrid structure could be an asset for these students, reducing the time presence within the classroom. Another characteristic of Web 2.0 is not requiring too much learning time to use with the available tools. Of course, the daily use of MP3, iPod's, computer games and tablets contributes to this trend. In addition, researchers found that collaborative learning helps students to retain information better than working individually (Johnson & Johnson 1986) because active participation is the component that contributes most to the learning effective (Ferdig, 2007). According to Brown and Adler (2008), within social learning, the students can ask questions to clarify dubious or confused topics easily, may learn from

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