

Interactive comment on “Web 2.0 collaboration tools to support student research in hydrology – an opinion” by A. Pathirana et al.

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Received and published: 10 April 2012

General comments

The paper discusses usage of a Wiki for teaching hydrology. It summarizes the results and experiences of 5 years of usage, and as such provides helpful advice and insights. However, the work is not particularly innovative. A significant amount of work exists in the literature that has investigated the use of Wikis (none of which is cited). This work has generally come to very similar conclusions. I am not aware of work in the area of hydrology, though.

A second significant problem is that the authors' expertise seems not to lie in the area of education. While this is not a problem per se, in this case the authors fail to place

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their pedagogical approach in context of today's learning theories. Section 2.2 contains what one could consider as a reference to where in the educational spectrum their work belongs, but the "Theory Y" is not a well-known theory in education. Given that the focus of HESSD is not education, the paper remains acceptable even if this discussion is not done in depth. But it has to be deepened to some degree, otherwise readers without any pedagogical knowledge might build up misconceptions. The authors should explain how their work relates constructivism or other approaches? Existing publications on the usage of Wiki will yield valuable references for this task.

The third significant problem is the unusual definition of PLE. There is a difference between a Web 2.0 tool and a PLE. A Personal Learning Environment is a framework/system that enables the users to assemble their own environment using existing Web 2.0 tools. Thus, a Web 2.0 tool (e.g., a Wiki) is a component of a PLE. The authors would be more on the safe side by removing the term PLE.

Finally, I feel that more care should be put in the paper by checking and correcting the large amount of grammar mistakes and by reworking the reference list (more on that below).

In summary, the presented work has the potential of contributing to the special issue as an experience report whose results are drawn from five years of experience. However, the paper has to be grounded into today's state of knowledge in technology-enhanced learning (TEL). If the paper were submitted to a journal in the area of TEL, I would recommend rejection. However, since it falls into the scope of the HESS special issue, it might be acceptable. Also, I'm not sure about the consequences of the decision of the editor ("it has to be rated as an 'opinion paper' rather than a science paper"). As an opinion paper, I would find a revised version of the paper acceptable.

Specific comments

Title: "Web 2.0 collaboration tools to support student research in hydrology – an opinion" Why do you talk about tools in plural? You only talk about a wiki.

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Page 2541, line 9-10: "Being an open ended and egalitarian system, it was a minimal burden to maintain"

What do you mean by "open ended"? How does it related to ease of maintenance?

Line 25: Prensky (2001) is not in the reference list

Regarding Web 2.0 and learning you might cite Ullrich, C., Borau, K., Luo, H., Tan, X., Shen, L. & Shen, R. (2008), "Why Web 2.0 is Good for Learning and for Research: Principles and Prototypes", In Proceedings of the 17th International World Wide Web Conference., pp. 705-714. ACM. which elaborates on the term "Web 2.0" with respect to education.

2547, 26: What does "vertically integrated" mean?

It is difficult to follow Section 6. Content seems to be repeated. I suggest to add subsections to make it clearer.

2557, 25: Why can't they express themselves freely in a forum created within Moodle?

2558, 10: What do you mean by "healthy competition"?

Technical corrections

I started to mark grammatical errors, but soon stopped due to the overwhelming amount.

Reference List: I find it very difficult to see what kind of publication the reference are. For instance, Bayne, S. and Ross. Is this a journal? Proceedings? Which of the references are really necessary? Can you reference fewer blogs/webpages? You should also remove some of the links, they make the reference list quite difficult to read.

Biggs, J. B., Tang, C. S., and Education, S. R. H.: I don't think that the third co-author is called "SRH Education". What kind of publication is this?

There are errors in several remaining references, too. Please check them all.

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Pathirana, 2006a,b Barrett, 2008: No need to put references for such technical issues.

Interactive comment on Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss., 9, 2541, 2012.

HESD

9, C751–C754, 2012

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