ISLT 450 Research
Article Critique 2
Bill Lynch

The Construction of Shared Knowledge in an Internet-based Shared Environment for Expeditions (iExpeditions)

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In the article "The Construction of Shared Knowledge in an Internet-based Shared Environment for Expeditions", the authors immediately make the purpose of the article known in several different ways. They begin with an "Abstract" stating the purpose of the article in relation to their case study. They further explain the purpose of the article in the following paragraph entitle "Introduction". The summarized purpose of the article is to inform the educational technologies community about a case study they administered involving cooperative learning in an online environment.

The article attempts to clarify the importance of a new online platform (iExpeditions) to facilitate collaborative education among learners within a set age group. Although emphasis was placed on the technological tool, the authors attempt on numerous occasions to stress the emphasis that the case study results have exposed "critical factors in shaping the quality of shared knowledge construction". This fact the writer of this review finds a little hard to believe. Yes, certain results were quantitatively established, such as charting of collaboration

times, categories, the results of which were also demonstrated in chart (Figure 2) and you may call them fact. But, in building collaborative educational environments you must concentrate on qualitative methods also. After all, these are people's lives you are trying to improve and someone who finds intrinsic value in a technological innovation is more likely to use it, tell their friends and promote diffusion.

To support the previous paragraph certain statements within the article should be addressed also. The author states in the beginning of the "Context of Study" section that a "three-hour face-to-face orientation" on how to use iExpedition was provided. First, are we to believe that the contexts of the study and/or desired results were not mentioned? And second the validity of the study itself is also jeopardized by this interaction whereas the nature of the study is to find out about cooperative learning "online" and to facilitate the same by students "both within the US and throughout the world".

It is also mentioned in the article that one group was comprised of siblings and a friend of theirs. Are we to believe they did not discuss this project offline? Emphasizing data from this test group throws up many flags for the writer of this review and again allows the questioning the validity of the study. Along these lines it is also mentioned that only %50 of the students finished the case study. These are very low numbers to attempt to draw a conclusion regarding any substantial findings. Again, the participants who finished were anything but

average users. The writer of this review will assume that students "selected" for this project had specific backgrounds. Since importance was placed on "coding" and other engineering considerations several times, it is safe to assume these students were the tops of their classes in an interface design or some other similar engineering course and had stake in the results of the case study. This point is also apparent whereas the stakeholder "Motorola" was mentioned several times including the statement that the students did a PowerPoint presentation to Motorola discussing the results. So the question the writer of this review has is, were the participants and or facilitator concerned about realistic research results to assist in the diffusion of an educational innovation or presenting a new gadget delivering desired results?

Among the obvious answers to create validity with the case study include various age groups, demographics, diverse learner characteristics and an online orientation for an online study.

Theory aside, the article was readable, easy to understand, well written and communicated the facts the authors wanted to reveal in an efficient manner. The authors made a point to emphasis the importance of the topic and continually supported the key issues and research results through the entire article. Also, the graphs and tables were used effectively within the article to support the corresponding written information.