WIKIS INTRODUCTION TO MALAYSIAN STUDENTS: A CONCEPTUAL VIEW

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to introduce Wiki as a piece of server software that allows users to freely create and edit Web page content using any Web browser. It is also called as a Content Management System (CMS) used for content management. Wiki supports hyperlinks and has simple text syntax for creating new pages and cross-links between internal pages. It also allows including computer files, image media, audio files, electronic document and web content. Since Wiki is new in Malaysia, the authors would like to introduce what is Wiki, discuss the list of wikis and elaborate what are the benefits and disadvantages of using Wiki, developed a Wiki for students, and discusses the implications of using Wiki as a collaborative tool in schools.

Keywords: Wiki, Content Management System, collaborative tool

INTRODUCTION

A Wiki (pronounced WICK-ee or WEE-kee) is a piece of open source system that allows multiple authors to edit web page content instantly by using only a web browser. Ward Cunningham who first developed Wikiwiki Web rendered into HTML through a Perl script written as collaborative software in 1995 first originated it from the primitive programming language of HyperCard¹. Wiki originates from the Hawaiian language which means “quick” that learned through frequent rides on the WikiWiki shuttle buses at the Honolulu International Airport. Due to its quick attributes, it allows pages to be automatically created and linked to each other. One of the best-known examples of wikis is Wikipedia as shown in Figure 1. It is an online encyclopedia created by numerous Internet users from around the globe. It is the largest encyclopedia created with 229 languages including 1,277,762 articles in English².

Figure 1: Wikipedia
The teachers should improve their knowledge in their subject matters and also understand the variety of students thinking as well. The key component of many successful teachers and students has begun emerging wiki technology to the educational system an add-on to web-based environment. Today’s learning differs from once-only education to a long-life learning education so the process of learning and teaching falls in one waterfall. We as teachers, gain much more than we used to last decade. We learn everyday as we progress and anticipate more into our subject matter cyclopedia on wiki. (Lamb,2004) states the needs of wiki to the educators and institutions saying “the needs are met by Wikis, unrestricted collaboration, easy authoring of Web content, The desire is clear; the will is insistent. Change is happening. What remains unknown is whether today’s educators, institutions, and developers will join (or coexist with) the revolutionary forces or whether they’ll stand their ground and simply be overrun”. For this reason we would present this paper in order to start think of incorporating wikis technology to our schools and community. Is it worth to start evaluating this technology? The rational answer would be. It would not hurt if we do so. A torrent of questions that would pop up accordingly, when is it time to start? Do we have to evaluate others assessment for using wiki or we ourselves do our own assessment? How the schools would start a Malaysian version of wiki. This paper hopes that we can find a practical standpoint to start with. The world today is changing. One of the emerging changes on the web is happening today. The future is promising with more names of Wiki like wikiversity, which is a space for the creation and use of free learning materials and activities, launched on the 15th August 2006 as wikibooks, wikiwiki, Tikiwiki ,Zwiki and Swicki. Wikis have just started and mentioning some great works on the net and is not confining to those mentioned.

**WIKI AS A COLLABORATIVE TOOL**

A wiki is known as a collaborative tool because it enables documents to be written collaboratively in a simple markup language using a web browser. It allows several concurrent users to create and manage information in a website. A single page in a wiki is referred to as a "wiki page", while the entire body of pages, which are usually highly interconnected via hyperlinks, is "the wiki". A wiki is essentially a database for creating, browsing and searching information. Many wikis are open to the public without the need to register any user account. Sometimes it will request for a log-in session for a “wiki-signature and this can be done in real-time and appear almost instantaneously online. Some sites with publicly accessible content-based collaborative software are WikiWikiWeb, Wikipedia and Everything2.

**WIKI AND WIKI-LIKE WEB CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (WCMS)**

Since 1995, many have produced dozens of wiki clones or Wiki-like Web Content Management Systems (WCMS) under an open source license that has shared and encourage several features such as computer files, image media, audio files, electronic documents and web content for free personal and commercial use. The WCMS system will make the files available inter-office as well as over the web and often be used as archival as well. Many companies use a CMS to store files in a non-proprietary form. It can support the following features such as:

- Import and creation of documents and multimedia material
- Identification of all key users and the content management roles
- The ability to assign roles and responsibilities to different content categories or types
- Workflow task by alerting changes in content
- The ability to track and manage multiple versions of a single instance of content
- The ability to publish the content to a repository to support access to the content
- Allow the textual aspect of content to be separated to some extent from formatting like setting default color, fonts or layout.

Some examples of wiki clone software are:

- Elements of WikiEssence
THE BENEFITS OF WIKI IN EDUCATION

- Wikis are ease of use and available in many Open Source/free or low cost software and hosting options to run them.
- Wikis support a near synchronous, non-hierarchical outcome that reflects the input of all participants unlike the more asynchronous content created through listserves and blogs. Information published to the latter must first pass through the editor before it becomes publicly available.
- Information posted to a wiki is immediately available for review and discussion. All Wikis include integrated search mechanisms for locating content while not all blog authoring applications and web-hosting services contain internal search engines.

THE DISADVANTAGES OF WIKIS IN EDUCATION

- Wikis are open to anyone within the domain served by the wiki, but they can be secured against content alteration by unauthenticated (uninvited) users. Blogs are secured against open collaboration; cut can be managed for limited collaboration, usually via appended comments or a threaded discussion forum.
- Sometimes Wikis are prone to vandalism and as a result too serious quality issues because of their free nature and lack of control over their content. Anyone can very easily post copyrighted material without permission of copyright holders, post unsuitable or misleading content, edit existing content in a way that reduces its quality/accuracy, or even delete/blank a good wiki entry. However, most good wiki software includes a restoration/rollback function, which allows the administrator/editor to revert a page back to its latest non-vandalized version.
- The lack of vital article meta-information is another potential serious issue. Wikis are authored by communities, not individuals and thus discourage the feeling of authorship. It is impossible to properly identify contributors to a wiki entry since wiki authors are typically anonymous, unless the group of contributors is extremely limited and/or authorial identification is enforced.
- Wikis anonymity poses enormous questions for higher education as one usually finds in wikis is IP addresses and nicknames of authors and editors. The lack of clear and complete authorship/editorship information attached to each wiki entry, including authors/editors’ affiliations and credentials, is a very serious quality issues encountered in most wiki-based encyclopedia.

THE USE OF WIKI IN EDUCATION

The Wiki website developed by the authors is http://rozinah.wikispaces.com. as shown in Figure 2. The page consists of New Page, Recent Changes, Navigation, Edit This Page, Page, Discussion, History, and Notify Me features.
Figure 2: A wiki website developed by the author.

A user will start with the opening a new account by clicking Join this Space and type in the Username and Password as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Username and Password

When they have sign in, the user can now edit the page, discuss and look into history of the previous group. They can have options like saving, sending and sharing of new information among their peer friends.

The Implications of Using Wiki as a Collaborative Tool in Schools.

Wikis enact knowledge building with and for others. The focus is on the community itself rather than on the individual learner (Holmes, Tangney, FitzGibbon, Savage, & Mehan, 2004). This implies to communal constructivism within the university context. Communal constructivism are students and teachers are not simply engaged in developing their own information but actively involved in creating knowledge that will benefit other students.
Wiki is quick and easy web publishing tool. It is collaborative content creation. It is within trusted community and experts of all ages. Wikis create the possibility for international “Collaborative Collectors” and interdisciplinary “social webs” that enhances social life through knowledge of and mutual participation in new type of cultural and leisure activities (Mark, 2001).

Wikis also give the possibility to users to meet virtually, to cooperate electronically and to build communities of practice known as social software (Viglas, 2006). Social software follows a bottom-up approach in the creation of online communities, where participation is voluntary and the individual identity is formulated gradually within a self-regulated and self-governed community.

CONCLUSION

As we know wiki technology pertains not only to the exchange of ideas but to the editing and publication of ideas as well. Wikis are based upon a principle of non-exclusive authority. Anyone and everyone get to decide what will be said (content), how it will be said (organization), and whether it will be said (dissemination).

REFERENCES


