PHYSIOTHERAPY EDUCATION 2.0: USING COLLABORATIVE WEB BASED TOOLS IN EDUCATION AND CLINICAL PRACTICE

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Introduction

In the recent years we have witnessed a rapid increase in the use of Web-based tools. These Web 2.0 applications, particularly wikis, blogs and podcasts, have been increasingly adopted by many online health-related professional and educational services. Because of their ease of use and rapidity of dissemination, they offer the opportunity for powerful information sharing and ease of collaboration that can be taken anywhere, providing the potential for "anytime, anywhere" learning experiences (mobile learning) (Boulos, 2006). Students are now more mobile than ever, and often find themselves located some distance from a parent institution on professional practice placement. The uses of such technologies to encourage learners' deeper engagement with learning materials, and the affordance of shared working spaces to improve collaboration between learners are desirable outcomes. It is generally held by many educators that students of all ages learn best when immersed within a culturally and socially rich environment in which scaffolding of learning can be achieved (McLean, 2007).

Relevance

The European Region of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy refers in its document European Benchmark Statement (ER-WCPT, 2003) that the Physiotherapist should have ICT competences, so that he/she is able to search for the required evidence to validate their interventions, as well as to process the data and records collected during the clinical practice. Therefore those skills should be developed during their basic training. In the context of the Physiotherapy course in the ESSA we have used in the last 3 years a set of web based tools to promote collaborative teaching/learning in the academic and clinical setting. This project includes a set of web based tools like Blogs to promote reflection and communication in clinical practice, wikis as mean to create student centered eBooks., podcasts to aggregate media files available on the web related to Physiotherapy and open source e-Learning platforms to support learning in academic and clinical settings. The participation of academic staff, students and clinical educators as been very high, with a very positive and motivated response .

Conclusion

As the Web 2.0 has definitely redefined the Web that we live in, the latest generation of collaborative Web-based tools, namely wikis, blogs and podcasts, offer many unique and powerful information sharing and collaboration features. Careful thinking and research are still needed in order to find the best ways to leverage these emerging tools to promote the teaching and learning. When learners and peers are committed to achieving the same goals, they tend to regulate each other's performances in positive outcome that can be facilitated through the use of shared, digital learning environments. The combination of 2.0 technologies has the potential to both liberate and tie learners together creating dynamic learning communities. Therefore it is essential that teachers and students realize the importance of ICT in their educational process, and by that motivating themselves for the pursuit of competences in this field. It is also necessary that the institutions set forward strategies that facilitated the integration of these technologies and consider the ongoing training of teachers and students.

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