



Pilot Online Wiki Workshop (27 August -10 September 2007): Description and Outcomes

1. Introduction

This report provides details of a pilot online workshop on wikis in teaching and learning which was offered from 27 August to 10 September 2007. It documents the processes used and the outcomes of the workshop, and includes recommendations which could inform further initiatives of this kind.

The aim of the workshop was to help prepare staff for teaching with wikis by asking them to experience the wiki environment as a student would, and then analyse this experience from a teaching perspective. The workshop involved three wikis which were hosted by Deakin University (using MediaWiki). Participants and facilitators were from Deakin University and Monash University.

Thirteen teaching or teaching support staff participated in the workshop, including eleven lecturers, one Associate Professor and one courseware developer. Seven were from Deakin University and six from Monash University. At Deakin University, participants were recruited through faculty-based teaching and learning staff who identified interested staff members or teachers who were currently trialling wikis in their units. Monash University participants were all staff members from the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences who had expressed interest in, but had no experience of, using wikis for teaching.

The facilitators were Gayani Samarawickrema from the Institute of Teaching and Learning at Deakin University, and Robyn Benson and Charlotte Brack from the Centre for Medical and Health Sciences Education at Monash University.

2. Workshop design

A wiki titled *Wikis in Higher Education* was created as the primary site for the workshop. It included:

- a range of resources about the use of wikis in higher education that participants could draw on;
- the workshop task;
- guidelines about working on a wiki; and
- links to two workshop wikis (*Workshop Wiki 1* and *Workshop Wiki 2*), where participants were asked to work in one of two teams (Team 1 and Team 2) to complete the workshop task.

Figure 1 shows how *Workshop Wiki 1* and *Workshop Wiki 2* are linked to the *Wikis in Higher Education* wiki.



Figure 1: The relationship between *Wikis in Higher Education* and the two workshop wikis

Participants were advised by email when the workshop opened and provided with login details. They were asked first to log on to the *Wikis in Higher Education* site to introduce themselves and find out about their task and the team they would be working in. They were then asked to log on to their individual workshop wiki to negotiate how they would address the task and develop their team response. The workshop wikis were restricted to team members only and, with the current wiki environment, this necessitated a double login: firstly to the Deakin wiki server, then to the individual workshop wiki. Each team comprised a combination of Deakin and Monash participants. There were six members in Team 1 (assigned to *Workshop Wiki 1*) and seven in Team 2 (assigned to *Workshop Wiki 2*). The task was designed to mimic a student group project that could be undertaken in a wiki, involving assessment of process and outcomes, including individual and group participation and the 'product' that was created. At the scheduled completion of the task, participants were given access to view the other team's wiki. They were then asked to return to the *Wikis in Higher Education* site for a debrief.

The workshop was scheduled as follows:

1. Introductions to each other and the task: Monday, 27 August
2. Completing the task: Monday, 27 August to Monday, 10 September
3. Debrief and evaluation: Monday, 10 September to Friday, 14 September.

Task details

In addition to their provision on the *Wikis in Higher Education* wiki, task details were included on the Main Page of each workshop wiki, with the suggestion that participants delete them from this location as soon as they were ready to begin their task. Participants were advised that by undertaking the task they would:

- engage in a wiki as students enrolled in a unit would;
- work collaboratively in a team to create a small body of work;
- present the work in a form which takes advantage of the wiki environment; and
- review the work created as a teacher would.

They were asked to follow the task instructions below:

1. Identify a student group project which could be undertaken in a wiki. You can use (or adapt) one of the two examples below – or you can create your own project. ***However, if you decide to create your own student project, your group will need to set a limited time to negotiate it, so that you have plenty of time to complete the task itself. See (2) below.***
 - **Example A:** Students might be asked to prepare a short online presentation on healthy eating targeted at a specific audience, such as teenage girls, in order to demonstrate that they could identify, apply and communicate appropriately some specific learning about nutrition.) As part of this you would need to think about the level of study and the likely characteristics of the students.
 - **Example B:** Postgraduate students in a research unit might be asked to use a wiki to design a research proposal for a case study on ICT use in higher education in Bhutan. Students would need to think about how they could use the features of a wiki for presenting their proposal.
2. Use your wiki with your team members to develop a set of guidelines you will give your students on working collaboratively and presenting their work on this project in a wiki. These will form the instructions you will be giving your students prior to the project you identified above. Use the discussion area in your wiki for group planning.
3. Include in your guidelines a simple rubric to assess (a) the wiki content, (b) the group effort, and (c) the individual effort. If you need some information about rubrics, see **Student assessment** in the left hand menu.
4. Use the features of the wiki to present your guidelines in a way that takes advantage of the wiki environment.

Debrief details

Participants were asked to return to the *Wikis in Higher Education* wiki for the debrief which consisted of three phases:

1. **Critique:** Participants were asked to critique the other team’s wiki and comment on: content, including the rubric (by looking at the ‘Main Page’); the team effort (by looking at the ‘Discussion’); and the individual efforts (by looking at the 'History' of the page, or 'Recent Changes').
2. **Reflection:** Participants were then asked to reflect and comment on their experience of working collaboratively in the wiki environment; what they had learnt; and how they might use wikis in teaching and learning.
3. **Evaluation:** Finally, they were asked to evaluate the workshop itself, commenting on what was useful and what they would change.

At the conclusion of the debrief, participants were sent a final email, closing the workshop and thanking them for their participation.

Facilitators’ role

The planned role of the facilitators during task completion was primarily to observe, and be available to answer questions or offer guidance via the workshop discussion on the *Wikis in Higher Education* site (where participants introduced themselves). A more proactive role was intended during the debrief in order to facilitate feedback and reflection, summarise participant responses, and share facilitator reflections. *Workshop Wiki 1* and *Workshop Wiki 2* were seen as belonging to the team members involved and facilitator participation on these wikis was not planned. However, some changes of plan occurred while the workshop was in progress and these are included in Section 3 below.

3. Progress during task completion

There were two major changes to planning which occurred while the workshop was in progress:

1. Group and individual emails were sent to participants at particular points during the workshop to offer encouragement and support. This occurred because discussion on the *Wikis in Higher Education* site did not occur as expected and email was seen as a more reliable way of contacting participants.
2. Some facilitation occurred on the workshop wikis in order to provide support and assist in task completion.

Progress during task completion is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Progress during task completion

| Day/Date | Progress |
|---------------------|---|
| Day 1: 27 August | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six of the 13 participants introduced themselves on the <i>Wikis in Higher Education</i> wiki. |
| Day 2: 28 August | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual emails were sent to the other seven participants (by the Deakin facilitator to three Deakin participants, and by the Monash facilitators to four Monash participants) to request their introductions. Twelve of the 13 participants had introduced themselves by the end of the day. • A notice was added to the Main Page of all three wikis to clarify task requirements and encourage participants to begin the task as soon as at least two members had begun to participate. |
| Day 3: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four participants in <i>Workshop Wiki 1</i> had accessed their wiki by this date, and two |

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 29 August | in <i>Workshop Wiki 2</i> . |
| Day 4: 30 August | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two further participants accessed <i>Workshop Wiki 2</i>. No additional participants accessed <i>Workshop Wiki 1</i>. Participants began negotiating but neither group had begun the task. • An encouraging mail was sent to Deakin and Monash groups separately with advice on initiating the task and indicating that the facilitators would delete the task details on the Main Pages soon so that they would have a clean wiki to start their task. |
| Day 5: 31 August | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The instructions were deleted (by the facilitators) as above. • Two participants began the task in <i>Workshop Wiki 1</i> (both of them with previous wiki experience). They requested <i>Sysop</i> access to create additional pages and this was given to all participants. Two participants also began discussing the task on the Main Page of <i>Workshop Wiki 2</i> but they did not begin the task itself. • At the end of Week 1, four participants had accessed each wiki. |
| Day 8: 3 September | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The thirteenth participant joined the workshop by contributing to the discussion in <i>Workshop Wiki 2</i>. Two additional comments were made on the Main Page but work on the task had still not begun. A small additional contribution to the task was made by a third participant in <i>Workshop Wiki 1</i>. |
| Day 9: 4 September | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small contribution was made to the task by the fourth participant in <i>Workshop Wiki 1</i>. The sixth participant accessed <i>Workshop Wiki 2</i>, making some comments, but there were no contributions to the task. • As progress had slowed on both wikis (and the task was due for completion on Day 12), facilitator messages were added to both wikis. In addition, some headings were added to the Main Page of <i>Workshop Wiki 2</i> to model use of the space to begin the task (rather than using it for discussion). |
| Day 10 5 September | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no contributions on either wiki. |
| Day 11 6 September | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no contributions in <i>Workshop Wiki 1</i> but one participant began the task response in <i>Workshop Wiki 2</i>, with a small contribution by a second participant. |
| Day 12 7 September | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three participants contributed to <i>Workshop Wiki 1</i>, one of them taking a major role in finalising the task. One of the two who had contributed to <i>Workshop Wiki 2</i> on Day 6 made a final contribution and sought help from others. • At the end of Week 2, five participants had accessed <i>Workshop Wiki 1</i>, with two making major contributions. Six had accessed <i>Workshop Wiki 2</i>, with one making a major contribution. |

4. The debrief

To commence the debrief, all participants were given access to *Workshop Wiki 1* and *Workshop Wiki 2* (on Day 15, 10 September). Contributions to the three debrief components (critique, reflection and evaluation) are summarised below.

Critique

As indicated earlier, in this section, participants were asked to critique each other's wikis and comment on the wiki content, and the individual and team effort. Four Team 2 members contributed to the critique of *Workshop Wiki 1*, two of them also referring to difficulties they experienced themselves (both mentioning the cumbersome double login procedure involved in accessing the main wiki and their workshop wiki, and one commenting on problems in 'deciphering' the history of recent changes). Three Team 1 members contributed to the critique of *Workshop Wiki 2*. Participant comments relating to both wikis are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Participant critiques of each other's wikis

| Comments on: | Workshop Wiki 1 | Workshop Wiki 2 |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Content | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content 'impressive' – in relation to clarity, navigation, insertion of links | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of lack of proof reading (including failure to remove participant comments from Main Page) Task confined to use of Main Page Needed to focus more on the task than the context; instructions and guidelines needed to be clearer; assessment criteria and weighting were not clarified Content appropriate but not well organised |
| Group effort | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows potential for a group task; gives clear instructions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too much time spent on the context of the task leaving insufficient time for the task itself Both teams needed a group leader – someone familiar with wiki editing. |
| Individual effort | No comments | No comments |
| Other issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concise with clear instructions Self-paced videos good (two comments) Include more guidelines for team-based projects | No Comments |

The two workshop wikis were also critiqued by a facilitator as if they were student projects. A rubric was prepared in Excel and used for this purpose, with a summary and analysis supporting the reasoning (See Appendix 1 - names of participants have been changed to maintain their anonymity). Those critiques were then made available on the *Wikis in Higher Education* site and participants were invited to comment. One Team 1 member responded positively to this and requested further information on preparing rubrics for assessing group work.

Reflection

Eight participants contributed their individual reflections on the *Wikis in Higher Education* site:

- Participants considered that the workshop helped to contextualise how wikis can be introduced to students, showing the importance of preparation and structure of student tasks and illustrating that wikis are not as straightforward as they seem and that this must be factored into participation. For example:

. . . not as straightforward as I first thought. Navigation and usability will come with more exposure. I see Wiki's playing an important role in our course next year - so, participating in the workshop has assisted in contextualising how I will use it next year. I think the social learning wiki's create (if constructed the correct way) will be successful for our students.

Most of the other reflections were related to time in various ways:

- There was agreement on the need for more time to discuss, plan and develop a strategy for the task, noting that progress is slowed if all are not available or not participating initially. For example:

Positive experience but... needs more time on task. As a teacher I'd be encouraging an allocated time for all to have their initial planning discussions as we wasted many days simply by not 'being there for each other' to get the planning and task allocation underway. This is exactly what happens to students given a group-work task so I guess it was to be expected.
- Participants also felt more time was needed to explore and become familiar with wiki navigation, functions and potential. For example:

Navigation in the early stages was very difficult for me. Perhaps suggest students spend time exploring early on AND also encourage discussions to stay on the discussions area
...
- The importance of an upfront investment in time for team formation and the development of trust was also noted, and recognised as impacting on the team product. One participant commented:

We could have benefited by deciding on a time where we chatted amongst ourselves synchronously and delegated roles etc. We came as strangers and left as individuals. Maybe we should have chatted synchronously first to develop the trust in each other.
- There was also recognition that the workshop experience forced participants to be prepared to change and modify other participants' contributions, and that democratic approaches are time consuming and require new ways of working. For example:

I really had to get my head around changing other people's contributions... Having the confidence to do this is something that takes time (well it did for me).

Evaluation

Five participants contributed their individual evaluations on the *Wikis in Higher Education* site. Their comments indicated that the experience of participating in a wiki was probably the most useful aspect of the workshop. However, the value of this participation was diluted by:

- technical issues (especially the double login and lack of familiarity with the wiki environment);
- lack of time on task and issues related to group formation; and
- a sense of needing more guidance, perhaps by clearer instructions (or by following them more carefully), or having a place to practise, but particularly through team leadership.

5. Discussion

The workshop highlighted the wide ranging wiki experience of participants. Two had previous wiki experience (they each had used a wiki in the unit they taught) but most were confused by the new environment, requiring more orientation than that provided on the *Wikis in Higher Education* wiki. Participants experienced difficulty in synchronising their time which would have been useful in the planning stage, experiencing competing demands on time and even illness, all problems similar to those experienced by students, but without the student incentive of completing an assessable task. In addition, unfamiliarity with the technology was a disincentive and the double logins added a further deterrent. Although the workshop was limited to three weeks because it was felt that any longer would not be realistic for busy academics, more time was needed for group formation. Participants hesitated to take leadership and did not offer to undertake specific roles as suggested to them.

Instead, they looked for consensus, hesitated to edit peer work and slowed the process as a result. Consequently, the content of the group project and the use of wiki features was quite limited (especially in *Workshop Wiki 2*), as was group contribution to the task itself, with some individual participants not contributing at all. Though some debrief comments suggested that the groups should be provided with a leader, imposing group leadership would remove participant negotiation of roles as part of the task and undermine the egalitarian nature of a wiki. Providing more information about group formation, group dynamics, roles and responsibilities of members, developing project timelines, and member roles will need to be addressed in future workshops.

Despite the problems that some participants experienced, which suggested a need for more orientation, the basic design of the workshop appeared to be appropriate, including the aim, objectives, the structure (including the debrief), and the idea of a collaborative task (with an output that reflects an assessable student project). There were several requests for more professional development of this kind, including comments such as 'I enjoyed it so keep me in mind for more' and '. . . count me in for another one. I liked it'. One participant also commented on the inter-university effort: 'A worthwhile exercise - especially because it involved a collaborative effort between 2 Melbourne Universities... I would also be happy to try again'. While for some participants the information in the *Wikis in Higher Education* site was initially overwhelming, by the end of the workshop one commented that it was useful. Another participant requested permission to 'copy and paste' information from the *Wikis in Higher Education* into a site she was setting up for her students, confirming the usefulness of this information beyond the current workshop.

Developing an assessment strategy for collaborative work and an assessment rubric was a key area where participants required more time. Though they appreciated this aspect of the task, the teams ran short of time and were unable to prepare an assessment strategy.

It was noteworthy that most participants were experienced in teaching online and some had taught wholly online units. Five specific approaches were suggested for using wikis for teaching. This indicated that wiki features, as well as a suitable pedagogy for their use, were being considered by the participants. However, these considerations did not extend to approaches to assessing collaborative work.

A facilitation issue raised by the workshop was that of determining an appropriate balance between giving help versus giving ownership and control of the workshop wikis to the participants, as well as giving 'equal' help to the two teams. Since the workshop wikis were seen as 'belonging' to the teams, the intention was to limit facilitation while the task was in progress. However, participants had difficulties in developing the wikis and intervention by facilitators was seen as necessary to identify the difficulties and to guide teams through them. As discussed above, the difficulties were related to insufficient time to explore and resolve team work and technical issues.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

The fact that the three-week workshop concluded with participants demonstrating further interest in professional development in this area, suggested that it would be worth offering again.

Based on experiences in this pilot workshop, the following recommendations would improve a subsequent offering:

1. Address the problem of the double login - while maintaining access by individual group members to their own wiki until the debrief.
2. Introduce some form of orientation to try and ensure that all participants have some basic familiarity with the technical aspects of wikis before they start the task. Gilly Salmon's staged approach could be appropriate if applied.
3. Allow time for participants to work out the differences between discussion and facilitation in a wiki compared to a Blackboard/WebCT site.
4. Since group formation takes time, introduce some strategies to try and kick start group formation, preferably during a face-to-face orientation session.
5. Ideally, offer the workshop in a context where there is a reward for participation (e.g., have it as a Graduate Certificate assignment), so that participants are able to give it the time and commitment which it really needs if the output is to reflect that of a student group project.

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Appendix 1 – Assessment rubric

| Group name: Workshop Wiki1: ICT USE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN BHUTAN | | |
|--|--|---------|
| Marker: Charlotte | | |
| Criterion | Comments | Mark |
| Group work: equal weight to: project management (roles/responsibilities, timelines), communication skills (discussion, presentation), problem solving (in working as a group) | Assessed from 'Discussions' <i>Project management:</i> Good recognition and discussion of most roles although the role of leader was not addressed. Responsibilities discussed were generally taken up where identified. More attention to timelines would be an advantage. <i>Communication skills:</i> generally well done, with honesty and willingness <i>Problem solving:</i> a good start to solving problems at both organisational and content levels. More time would have helped. | 26 /40 |
| Content: equal weight to: accuracy and completeness (investigative skills), clarity and succinctness (no plagiarism!) | The content in the wiki is clear and accurate. While there are gaps in the content the list of headings is comprehensive and relevant. A page for resources relating to issues of ICT in Bhutan would be a useful addition. | 25 /30 |
| Presentation: equal weight to: clarity, site layout (navigation), interface design | The site was well structured and with clear navigation to sections. The interface chosen was minimalist and elegant :-) with good use of text characteristics. | 30 /30 |
| Total | | 81 /100 |

Individual Student Assessment

| Contribution to the wiki is assessed from information in the 'history' (*NB see summary and analysis of the history pages below). | Student: to calculate the individual student mark the group mark(above) is adjusted by the proportion below | Mark |
|--|--|-------------|
| Maximum participation, contribution to aspects as described by their articulated roles and responsibilities in the group | Anne, Adam: 100% | 81 |
| Moderate participation contribution to some but not all aspects | Olivia, Chang Li: 75% | 60.8 |
| Minimal contribution to some aspects | Juli: 50% | 40.5 |
| No participation :-) | Sam: 0% | 0 |

* Summary and analysis of history

| Date | Contributor | No. of edits | Type of contribution |
|------|-------------|--------------|---|
| 30.8 | Adam | 3 | Excellent content, good problem solving |
| 31.8 | Anne | 9 | Excellent editing and development of content |
| 31.8 | Adam | 5 | Excellent collaborative editing |
| 31.8 | Anne | 3 | Good editing |
| 31.8 | Adam | 1 | Small but significant contribution to educational design and content |
| 3.9 | Juli | 1 | Minor edit (but at least it was something) |
| 4.9 | Olivia | 1 | Significant contribution to content and structure |
| 7.9 | Chang Li | 4 | Useful formatting contributing to site structure |
| 7.9 | Adam | 1 | Contributed new page |
| 7.9 | Anne | 14 | Considerable and significant contributions to content, editing and site structure |

| | | |
|--|---|-------------|
| Group name: Workshop Wiki2: DUMU101 Healthy Eating, Healthy Living | | |
| Marker: Charlotte | | |
| Criterion | Comments | Mark |
| Group work: equal weight to: project management (roles/responsibilities, timelines), communication skills (discussion, presentation), problem solving (in working as a group) | Assessed from 'Discussions' <i>Project management:</i> Good intros of group members and choice of topic. Scant discussion of roles/responsibilities. Issue of leadership not discussed. Attention to timelines would be an advantage. <i>Communication skills:</i> generally OK, more candour in relation to difficulties may have helped resolve some difficulties. <i>Problem solving:</i> lone attempt at problem solving didn't quite do the trick. More time would have helped. | 16 /40 |
| Content: equal weight to: accuracy and completeness (investigative skills), clarity and succinctness (no plagiarism!) | A good start with some clear and relevant headings. Some good ideas for content in some sections. A page for resources relating to issues of healthy eating and healthy living would be a useful addition. | 20 /30 |
| Presentation: equal weight to: clarity, site layout (navigation), interface design | The site is minimally laid out. It does have a title and headings, which is good. It would benefit from further consideration of usability and engagement. | 15 /30 |
| Total | | 51 /100 |

Individual Student Assessment

| Contribution to the wiki is assessed from information in the 'history' (*NB see <i>summary and analysis of the history pages below</i>). | Student: to calculate the individual student mark the group mark(above) is adjusted by the proportion below | Mark |
|--|--|-------------|
| Maximum participation, contribution to aspects as described by their articulated roles and responsibilities in the group | Lyn, : 100% | 51 |
| Moderate participation contribution to some but not all aspects | Bert, Bella, Wanda: 75% | 39.3 |
| Minimal contribution to some aspects | 50% | 25.5 |
| No participation :-(| Rosy, Jen, Samuel: 0% | 0 |

* Summary and analysis of history

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Contributor</i> | <i>No. of edits</i> | <i>Type of contribution</i> |
|-------------|--------------------|---------------------|---|
| 31.8 | Bert | 3 | Good ideas for content, excellent starting point |
| 31.8 | Wanda | 1 | Small but significant contribution to educational design |
| 1.9 | Bert | 1 | Good collaborative problem solving |
| 3.9 | Lyn | 1 | Useful feedback |
| 3.9 | Bella | 1 | Good development of ideas and content |
| 6.9 | Wanda | 2 | Significant input to content |
| 6.9 | Lyn | 8 | Significant contribution to content, formatting and educational design. |