



Expanding Communication in the Transition Process: Can Edublogs Help?

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ABSTRACT: This exploratory study examined the introduction and use of Edublogs as a collaborative communication tool in three university graduate courses to enhance the development of transition plans for students with disabilities. Participants were enrolled in one of three courses that addressed Transition and Legal Issues in Special Education. Pre-and-post surveys were given to determine participants' knowledge, feelings, and experiences with the use of Edublogs, as well as their attitudes before and after the introduction and use of Edublogs. Results indicated that participants' attitudes varied minimally; however, post-survey comments revealed more familiarity and comfort with the use of this Web 2.0 technology in collaborating with students, colleagues and families to enhance participation in transition meetings for students with disabilities with minimal barriers related to time and location.

Keywords: individualized transition plans, technology, family, edublogs, communication

Introduction

Along with other key pieces of education, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) has shaped the ways in which we measure education. Indeed, IDEA has identified 20 indicators to assist school districts as they implement this legislation. Indicator 13 specifies the levels of involvement by students with disabilities along with their families' participation in the transition planning process. To increase student and family engagement required by Indicator 13, the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) has developed a checklist that guides states through the development of quality transition plans related to Indicator 13. During NSTTAC's Annual State Planning Institutes, state transition planning teams examine their state plans and develop goals and action plans for improvement. The areas the teams address are based on the *Taxonomy for Transition Programming*, which include: Student-focused planning; Student Development; Family Involvement; Program Structure; and Interagency Collaboration (Kohler, 1996). Teams report high percentages of districts in compliance with I-13 using NSTTAC's *I-13 Checklist* in their efforts to include families, students, and stakeholders into the planning process;

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however, quality of participation and involvement is not a part of their reports (Melton, 2011; Florida Department of Education, 2011; Texas Education Agency, 2012).

Although significant progress has been made in special education over the last 30 years, numerous studies have reported that this progress has been marked by inconsistent outcomes for students with disabilities (e. g., Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knokey, 2009; Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, & Levine, 2005). Different outcomes are noted for children with disabilities with respect to gender, race/ethnicity, language, socioeconomic background, cultural identity and geographical location (Flexer, Daviso, Baer, Queen, & Meindl, 2011; Sitlington, Neubert, & Clark, 2010). Given the increased numbers of diverse students with disabilities who receive services and the wide ranges of their families' needs, school and agency personnel must be equipped to meet these varied and complex needs. For example, students with disabilities who come to school from a different country, may be overwhelmed with a new environment, may have limited or no English language, or may come from homes or communities with limited economic and human resources. Therefore, varied and innovative communication options need to be embraced and nurtured to promote and ensure more student and family voice in developing transition plans that could assist in minimizing the gaps in post school outcomes of students with disabilities and their peers without disabilities (Cobb, Lipscomb, Wolgemuth, & Schulte, 2013). Teachers' sensitivity to the impact of diversity, can be involved in and help sustain meaningful collaborative communication between schools, families, and other service agencies (Sitlington, Neubert, & Clark, 2010).

Many educators may be concerned about their inability to maintain ongoing communication with parents of children with disabilities. Some contribute this disconnect to parents' lack of concern about their child's education (Patterson, Krudwig, & Webb, 2009; Webb & Krudwig, 2004). Schools often attempt communication with families during inappropriate times (Wandry & Pleet, 2004). For example, meetings are often scheduled at school settings during 8am-3pm, which is typically the same timeframe when the majority of parents are also working. Many parents express difficulty in getting off work for 30 minutes to one-hour meetings. The literature include a variety of alternative communication strategies that respect, acknowledge and adjust to meeting times that would meet both stakeholders' and family needs, which are crucial in building connections that are at levels needed in order to build effective transition plans (Edutopia, 2011; Grant, 2011; Kang & Cho, 2014). Ensuring quality education and transition services in future settings may require educators to take advantage of the innovations of current technologies. Web 2.0 technologies have had a major impact of how information is shared, created, and altered among consumers (Chai, Das, & Rao, 2011; Huber, 2010; Lai & Turban, 2008). These technologies include such tools as wikis, RSS (really simple syndication) feeds, podcasting, media sharing, or blogs. Social networking mediums that rely on 2.0 technology are growing and can be essential tools in assisting teachers and other transition stakeholders. Further, these mediums may have the capacity to enhance and

expand the collaborative process that will lead to the development of quality, transparent transition plans, and ultimately, more robust postsecondary results.

A Blog is short hand for the word “weblog.” It is an online, chronological collection of personal commentary and links (EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative, 2005). Blogs that address a variety of educational topics are called Edublogs (Ray, 2006). Educators using Edublogs can strengthen skills in technology, model use of technology for students and families, and use the tool to serve as a medium for disseminating information (Liping & Yuen, 2011; Makri & Kynigos, 2007; Ray & Coulter, 2008; Yang, 2009). Edublogs can be beneficial tools for teachers because they are free, quick, easy to use, readily accessible, help to facilitate communication, highlight key information, promote higher levels of thinking, and are one of the most current social media technologies being used by a variety of audiences today. In addition, Ferdig and Trammell (2004) posits that Edublogs can be beneficial to students by: (a) helping them become subject-matter experts; (b) increasing their interest and ownership of learning; (c) giving them legitimate chances to participate in the learning environment; and (d) providing opportunities for diverse perspectives, both within and outside of the classroom.

Advancements in technology have improved the academic and social support systems for individuals with disabilities and families. Therefore, it is important for educators and families to recognize that there are significant opportunities for the integration of instructional and educational technology in the education process (Skylar, 2008). Although students and families are fluent in some technology, they do not routinely use technology to seek information about students' progress (Becker, 2000; Cuban, Kirkpatrick, & Peck, 2001). Professional development work in informing and helping teachers feel comfortable with the use of technology like Edublogs could strengthen skills in technology, model use of technology for students and their families, and serve as a tool for information dissemination (Epler, 2009; Urbano & Villanueva, 2012). Therefore, to give graduate students in education further access to at least one of the Web 2.0 technologies, the authors introduced Edublogs to model technology use in teacher training programs in order to increase appropriate professional use in their classrooms (Hegwer-DiVita, 2000). Despite the abundance of research on effective practices of use of Edublogs, there are no studies that examine teacher and transition practitioners' use of Edublogsto enhance transition planning. Perhaps teachers are most likely to utilize intervention strategies in their teaching practices if certain criteria are met. For example, Carnine (1997) suggests that, among other strategies and important considerations, it was important for interventions to be teacher-friendly. One reason teachers do not utilize research findings in their classrooms is that research is typically not presented in such a way that teachers can readily apply it (Carnine, 1995; 1997). In addition to being accessible and trustworthy, the research must exhibit "useability" if they are to be consistently applied by most teachers (Landrum, Cook, Tankersley, & Fitzgerald, 2007). Furthermore, when teachers read or hear about research findings that demonstrate useability, they can quickly recognize how these interventions or teaching

methods can apply to their classroom and students. The purpose of this study was to examine participants' perception of use of Edublogs for sharing information about transition related issues to others. Our research questions were: (a) After being introduced to and using Edublogs, will participants' attitudes related to using Edublogs in teaching and learning change?; and (b) After being introduced to and using Edublogs, will participants express a difference about their knowledge, feelings, and experiences with Edublogs for teaching and learning transition related issues?

Method

Participants

Table 1 summarizes the demographics of the participants.

Table 1
Descriptive Characteristic of Sample Demographic (N=33)

Respondent Characteristics	SE University <i>N</i> (%)	SW University <i>N</i> (%)	Total <i>N</i> (%)
Race/Ethnicity			
African American	1(3)	0(0)	1(3)
Caucasian	6(18)	22(67)	28(85)
Hispanic	0(0)	1(3)	1(3)
Native American	0(0)	1(3)	1(3)
Other	2(6)	0(0)	2(6)
Gender			
Male	1(3)	0(0)	1(3)
Female	9(27)	23(70)	32(97)
Academic Status:			
Graduates	All	All	All
Teaching			
Preschool	0(0)	3(10)	3(10)
Elementary	4(12)	1(3)	5(15)
Middle	0(0)	3(9)	3(9)
High	1(3)	0(0)	1(3)
Community Agency	4(12)	0(0)	4(12)
Other	2(6)	15(45)	17(51)
School Districts			
Urban	14(43)	0(0)	14(43)
Rural	2(6)	10(30)	12(36)
Other	0(0)	7(21)	7(21)

Certification Areas (Social Work; Diagnostician; Special Education; School Psychology) Average Years of Experience (8 years)

Thirty-three (32 females, one male) graduate students from two universities participated in this study. Participants came from a range of professions and environments. Fifty-one percent (n=21) of participants worked in non-education settings (e.g, Tutoring, Homecare, Childcare). Thirty-seven percent (n=12) were teachers working in grades Pre-K through 12 in public school settings, while 12% (n=4) were professionals who worked in community agencies. Eighty-five percent reported they were White (n=28), 3% reported being, Hispanic, American Indian, Mestizo, and Garifuna (n=1), respectively. One university was located in the Southeast area of the United States. The other was located in the Southwest region of the country. Participants were enrolled in one of three courses: two were online and the other was face-to-face. The courses were related to Transition and Legal Issues in Special Education. Participants were majoring in the following areas: Special Education, Social Work, School Psychology, and Educational Diagnostician.

Survey

Part one of the survey requested demographic information from the participants, and asked them to respond to the following three questions: (a) *Tell us what you know about Edublogs*, (b) *Tells us what you think about Edublogs*, and (c) *Tell us about your own experiences with Edublogs*. The second part of the survey included a 15 multi-item, seven-point Likert scale with 1=Strongly Disagree; 7=Strongly Agree. Participants were asked to rate how they felt between pairs of adjectives about the use and benefits of using Edublogs for teaching and learning. The adjective pairs were: *essential-nonessential*; *familiar-unknown*; *useless-useful*; *important-unimportant*; *frustrating-easy to use*; *necessary-unnecessary*; *unproductive-productive*; *simple-complicated*; *inefficient-efficient*; *expanding-limiting*; *understandable-puzzling*; *worthless-valuable*; *confusing-clear*; *effective-ineffective*; and *time consuming-time saving*. The adjective pairs were presented in seven reverse and eight non-reverse formats. Additionally, an optional comments section was included after the ratings. The survey was adapted from Liaw's (2002) web attitude scale (WAS), which is a valid and reliable scale to measure individual's perceptions towards web self-efficacy, liking, usefulness and behavioral intention to use and learn the web.

Procedure

This was an exploratory study that used a pre/post survey with an audience of convenience with three graduate courses at two universities. The three instructors (who are also authors of this paper) collaborated via telephone and e-mail to determine the guidelines for implementing the Edublogs in their courses. An agreed upon grading rubric was developed that included the major components in which to evaluate the Edublog and degree of interactions. The instructors also agreed upon the topics and order of discussions. The instructors provided surveys to participants at the beginning and end of a sixteen-week semester. Prior to instruction and explanations about Edublogs, participants were given the pre-surveys. Surveys were directly given to participants who were in the face-to-face course, whereas participants in the online

courses received the surveys electronically via a learning management system (i.e., Blackboard, or university dedicated online system).

During the first two weeks of the semester, instruction and demonstrations of how to create and use Edublogs were provided along with other course information. Each participant was responsible for creating an Edublog using www.blogger.com. Instructors paired the 33 participants into groups of two, with the exception of one group of three. The grading rubric, in Table 2, was provided, along with instructions for communication of how the collaborative pairs were to interact over a period of 10 weeks. For example, participants had four required transition goal areas (Employment, Postsecondary Education, Vocational Education/Training, and Independent Living) as their focus areas for each week of postings. Additionally, 6 more goal areas were included to provide more choice options, all of which are recognized as transition goal areas (IDEA, 2004). The selection order for the discussion topic for each Edublog was the participants' choice. The weekly postings format was as follows: (a) a general overview of the posting (goal area and target audience); (b) a minimum of three information resources (e.g., book, video, and website); and (c) a brief description of each benefit of resource to individuals with disabilities. Once their information was posted, their partners had to make specific comments about the following: (a) their impressions of the resources; (b) what they liked most about the postings; and (c) how they might use the information as professionals. At the completion of each week, the instructors graded Edublog interactions and provided feedback of how to continue or enrich communication activities. For example, if one partner's comment was "*This is great!*" the instructor would provide feedback that the partner needed to be more specific about the information presented.

Table 2
Edublog Scoring Rubric

CATEGORY	9-10	6-8	3-5	0-2
1. Look	Makes excellent use of font, color, graphics, effects, etc. to enhance the presentation.	Makes good use of font, color, graphics, effects, etc. to enhance to presentation.	Makes use of font, color, graphics, effects, etc. but occasionally these detract from the presentation content.	Use of font, color, graphics, effects etc. but these often distract from the presentation content.
2. Postsecondary Goal Areas	Clearly covers more than three transition goal areas	Clearly covers three goal areas	Clearly covers two transition goal areas	Clearly covers one transition goal area
3. Number of Links	There are three or more links per transition goal area	There are two links per transition goal area	There is one link per transition goal area.	Not all goal areas have links.
4. Quality of Links	The linked sites are well designed, educationally sound, and appropriate for the intended audience	Most linked sites are well designed, educationally sound, and appropriate for the intended audience	Some linked sites are well designed, educationally sound, and appropriate for the intended audience	Few linked sites are well designed, educationally sound, and appropriate for the intended audience
5. Alignment Between Links Goal Areas	There is clear connection between all links and their transition goal area.	There is clear connection between most links and their transition goal area	There is clear connection between some links and their transition goal area	There is clear connection between few links and their transition goal area
6. Writing	All transition goal areas are clearly defined and explained to target audience.	Most transition goal areas are clearly defined and explained to target audience.	Some transition goal areas are clearly defined and explained to target audience.	Few transition goal areas are clearly defined and explained to target audience.
7. Grammar and More	All postings are free of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and mechanical errors.	Most postings are free of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and mechanical errors.	Some postings are free of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and mechanical errors.	Few postings are free of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and mechanical errors.
8. Organization	Content is well organized using headings or bulleted lists to group related material.	Uses headings or bulleted lists to organize, but the overall organization of topics appears flawed.	Content is logically organized for the most part.	There was no clear or logical organizational structure, just lots of links.
9. Original Posting	There are at least 10 postings that are related to goal areas and each prompts further discussion of each topic	There are less than 10 postings that are related to goal areas and each prompts further discussion of topic	Posts are short in length and offer little insight into the topic	Posts are short in length and offer no further insight into the topic
10. Comments	Expresses opinions and ideas in a clear and concise manner with obvious connection to each topic category	Expresses opinions and ideas in a clear and concise manner with obvious connection to some topic categories	Unclear connection to categories evidenced in minimal expression of opinions or ideas	Does not express opinions or ideas clearly; no connection to categories

Data Analyses

We used inferential analyses to address the first research question in which we investigated if there would be a difference in the participants' attitudes toward using Edublogs in teaching and learning related to transition following the 10-week period of intervention. Researchers cleared and reviewed data for coding errors and checked for statistical assumptions with respect to skewness and distribution. Analysis of the assumptions indicated that data were not normally distributed. Therefore, non-parametric tests were used. Non-parametric tests require no assumptions about the distribution of scores and involve rank ordering to minimize the possible effects of outliers; and differences in the sample size between the groups can be accommodated (Pagano, 2013). From the series of possible nonparametric tests, the analyses will characterize significant via the Mann-Whitney test. This non-parametric test was chosen because of the small sample size and the independence of the respective variables. The Mann-Whitney's level of significance is for $p < .05$, with the two-tailed test. Therefore, a series of Mann-Whitney tests and Chi-Square analyses were used to compare pre-and post-responses of the fifteen multi-item variables.

Qualitative analyses were used for the second research question inquiring if there would be a difference in what participants expressed about their knowledge, feelings, and experiences with Edublogs before and after developing transition Edublogs. Participants' responses related to the three areas of this research question were grouped, and then examined for commonalities in each area. Conventional content analysis was used to generate categories of responses. Content analysis involves subjectively interpreting text by classifying, coding, and identifying themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). An inductive approach to data analysis was employed, such that no preconceived theories were imposed on the data; rather, we attended to the themes that emerged from the data. We used the method of open-coding to identify statements related to Edublogs. This process yielded 77 total statements or phrases reflecting a variety of knowledge, thoughts, and experiences of the 33 participants from both pre-and post-surveys. More specifically, 35 statements were noted in the pre-survey and 42 statements were in the post-survey. Using the process of constant comparison, the statements from pre-and-post surveys were categorized by grouping together similar statements and phrases into themes, respectively. Categories were examined in relation to each other, resulting in a hierarchical structure. We reached a consensus about the codes and themes, and collaborated to reduce the data into the final categories.

Results

The analysis and results are organized by research question, followed by discussion.

Research Question 1: After being introduced to and using Edublogs, will participants' attitudes related to using Edublogs in teaching and learning change?

Table 3
Results for Mann-Whitney U-Tests for Variable of Interest

Variables	Pre-Median	Post -Median	U	p-value
Time-saving – Time-Consuming	4	5	547.50	.0001*
Easy-to-Use - Frustrating	4	3	372.50	.9641
Effective – Ineffective	3	3	427.00	.5356
Clear - Confusing	4	3	372.00	.2922
Understandable - Puzzling	2	4	310.50	.0735
Productive - Unproductive	3	3.5	439.50	.4213
Important - Unimportant	4	3	411.50	.3058
Useful - Useless	4	3.5	415.00	.9007
Familiar - Unknown	6	3.5	306.00	.0044*
Expanding - Limiting	4	3	339.50	.3582
Efficient - Inefficient	4	3	397.00	.7273
Necessary - Unnecessary	4	4	463.00	.7722
Simple - Complicated	4	3	316.50	.1069
Valuable -Worthless	4	3	426.50	.6553
Essential - Nonessential	4	4	437.00	.7165

Note†= Based on 7-point Likert 1 “strongly agree” to 7 “strongly disagree”

*P-value < .05

Comparisons between pre-and post-responses related to participants’ feelings about their use of Edublogs for teaching and learning yielded two significant variable pairs. Non-parametric tests of significance (Mann-Whitney U, $p < .05$, two-tailed) were used to test for differences. Of the 15 multi-item pairs, *Time consuming-Time saving* (Table 3) was found to be significant at the .05 level with median response ratings for pre (M=4) and post (M=5); U (547.50), $p=.0001$. This indicated participants recognized that the use of Edublogs was a time consuming tool when used to communicate teaching and learning ideas with peers. *Familiar-Unknown* was also found significant with median response ratings for pre (M=6) and post (M=3.5); U (306.00), $p=.0044$. The results indicated participants felt more familiar with the use of Edublogs as an effective tool for communicating teaching and learning ideas to peers after the 10-week intervention period. This analysis also revealed that there is not enough evidence at the .05 level of significance to determine if participants’ feelings changed after the 10-week intervention period, with respect to the other 13 variable pairs.

Research Question 2: After being introduced to and using Edublogs, will participants express a difference about their knowledge, feelings, and experiences with Edublogs for teaching and learning transition related issues?

The analyses of data of pre-and post-surveys revealed a range of themes related the participants' *knowledge, thoughts, and experiences* of their use of Edublogs.

Pre-Knowledge. The emerging themes were: (a) little to no knowledge about Edublogs; (b) Edublogs as a communication resource among professionals and families; (c) Edublogs as an instructional tool for teachers; and (d) Edublogs are similar to Facebook where individuals can update others of events.

Post-Knowledge. The major theme from this category was that Edublogs was an effective communication resource to use among students, parents, and other professionals. This was consistent with one of the pre-survey themes. Therefore, indicating little change occurred in participants' knowledge about Edublogs after having an experience in creating and maintaining one.

Pre-Thoughts. The following three themes emerged from this category: (a) communication tool for support and feedback; (b) excited for innovation; and (c) collaboration between practitioners and families.

Post-Thoughts. The following three themes emerged from this category: (1) communication tool with others between school and home; (2) localized information for a variety of stakeholders; (3) tool for sharing resources. After developing and using an Edublog, participants' thoughts about its use for teaching and learning still saw it as viable tool for communicating among several professionals and families. However, the participants' familiarity with Edublogs helped them to see how this form of communication could occur in a place of convenience for sharing.

Pre-Experiences. The only emerging theme was that participants had no experience with the use of Edublogs.

Post-Experiences. Three emerging themes from this category were: (1) challenging to use at the onset; (2) Edublogs provided an awareness of resources; and (3) working with partners was challenging. These themes vary greatly from the pre-survey's major theme, which was no experience with the use of Edublogs. After participants developed and maintained an Edublog, they were now in a position to provide details on what that experience entailed.

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

The current study examined the teaching and use of Edublogs as a collaborative communication tool to enhance the development of transition plans for students with disabilities and the impact on the participants' knowledge, thoughts, experiences, and attitudes over a 10-week period. Analysis revealed few significant differences between pre-and post-survey results. Out of the 15-multi-item pairs, only two pairs were significant at .05 level when examining pre-and post-results (i.e., *Time consuming-Time*

saving; Familiar-Unknown). As novices to the content about transition and lack of experience about the use of Edublogs, participants were learning while being evaluated on the application of content and use of technology. Therefore, their feelings of use were possibly unchanged because the structure of the course and the concept of blogging for teaching and learning may have been too nebulous for participants to clearly differentiate. Of the 15 multi-item pairs, participants could probably better relate to *familiarity* and *time* issues than they could with perhaps *value* or *effectiveness* of a communication tool like the Edublog. For example, in relation to familiarity, participants noted:

“I had never heard of edublogs before. It was a new concept to me. Now I know they are a source of communication that can be used for classes all over the nation.”

“After having a little bit of experience with edublogs, I think that they have a vital place in modern education. Since I teach in a high school setting this mode of communication will be beneficial for my classes. My students already know more about blogging than I do and using that knowledge to increase their learning only makes sense.”

“I had a hard time getting familiar with edublogs, but once I got the hang of it I thought that it was fairly simple to use...Overall, I had a good experience with the edublogs.”

“This is the first time I used edublogs. I actually am using in another online class as well. So going into this course I knew nothing about Edublogs.”

“It took a while for me to get used to the format and adding information but after a few postings I got the hang of it and enjoyed it. It was nice to see and read information posted by other people and gain more knowledge and resources.”

The *Time consuming-Time saving* item pair was a significant variable in this study. Perhaps *time-consuming* may be a factor of the participants' inexperience with Edublogs. In other words, if participants are proficient at searching the web for appropriate topical resources to include in an Edublog, then it is more likely that less time would have been used to complete the weekly tasks. Participants' conveyed sentiments to this effect are in the following quotes:

“My only experiences with edublogs have been through this course. At times it seemed like busy work, but I say I did get knowledge out of them, am now more skilled at putting information into a format that the general public can understand.”

“I thought building up your own Edublog page would be hard, but I turned out to be mistaken. At the beginning I was a little confused and overwhelmed with the different options and commands available, but with time, I got to know what everything was, and it just made my life easier. I personally enjoyed creating my edublog; the part of finding what exactly I wanted to post, was a

little hard since there were so many sources and links for each option, but once I got that out of the way, I truly enjoyed finding right and adequate drawings or cartoon that would enhance my posting.”

“There’s so much blogging going on I personally don’t have the time or inclination to wade through too many of them. It may be effective if you have a targeted audience (i.e., a teacher communicating with students and parents).”

When examining pre- and post-responses addressing the three questions about Edublogs on the second part of the survey, participants’ statements in post-surveys were more specific about usefulness and uniqueness of the Edublogs. After the Edublog experience, participants were able to provide more practical insight about the extent to which Edublogs could be used, as indicated in the following:

“Looking at other blogs gives you great ideas that provide us with information to help us better ourselves as teachers and as individuals who are working with people who have needs that may be different than our own. I think that this was a great assignment and should be used in other classes that are online.”

“Edublog helped me learn a lot about technology and how much information I truly have at my fingertips! It helped me express & advocate in a way I had not before and felt like a true contributor to the body of knowledge out there and breaking barriers.”

“I thoroughly enjoyed preparing my blog and reading the blogs of others. I think it is an OUTSTANDING method to use as an activity to create interest and understanding of any subject/topic. Self-discovery learning is what edublogs is all about.”

Before being introduced to the use of Edublogs, participants had little to no knowledge of their use. Once being introduced as a major course assignment, feelings and perceptions were bound to change. In other words, using blogs in the social media, similar to other Web 2.0 (Facebook, twitter) technologies is a voluntary and often enjoyable activity. However, in a structured course setting, with grade and time constraints, participants’ communication was prescribed and perhaps more limiting than they were accustomed to experiencing. Perhaps this is evidenced by the following comments from participants:

“This was my first experience with an edublog and I found it quite annoying. I would hope that an edublog that I created would be able to have the flexibility for me to blog about topics that I am passionate about.”

“I think weblogs are great but under the circumstances we had to do it, I found it time consuming and frustrating due the work overload from different courses.”

“Although I found it challenging to find the necessary time to attempt the requirements for this part of my course, the information I learned about and through using the edublog format has been extremely educational. I can’t wait to gain permission to use it in my classroom!! Thank you for providing an

opportunity to experience edublog!! I probably would never have tried it if it had not been a requirement for this course.”

The purpose of this study was to introduce the use of Edublogs and to examine participants' perceptions of the Edublog use for communicating transition related information. The introduction of an Edublog as an intervention was important because the authors wanted to expand the communication tools that teachers and other professionals could use to collaborate. Collaborating with peers allowed students to practice in a safe environment and offered ways in which they could determine the benefits of including an ongoing dialogue with consumers about transition issues.

Many Web 2.0 technologies are used primarily in social contexts that are also applicable in other settings. Because of the flexibility of this tool, it provides a diverse platform for enhancing professional skills and communication among teachers, families, and other professional. Our desire was to introduce a practical, inexpensive, and easy to use communication tool that participants could experience. Furthermore, participants could exit this process with the knowledge and skills necessary to use a tool that is readily available that could offset barriers with time and space for meetings and meaningful interactions. Therefore, it was important in this study for participants to experience the process of using Edublog (as both a professional and a consumer) so that they could determine the benefits and appropriateness of using this method in their future teaching and professional settings. Landrum, et al., (2007) suggested one of the most significant challenges in special education appears to be finding ways to increase the frequency with which teachers use research-based teaching techniques. Landrum and colleagues emphasized teachers need to believe they can implement research supported practices into their classrooms. Furthermore, if teachers do not deem research relevant to their own classrooms and students, or cannot readily envision how to apply research-supported practices, there is little or no chance that they will use such techniques, regardless of how effective research has demonstrated them to be. The experience, although tedious for participants, was generally a beneficial learning opportunity of how to use a tool like Edublogs, beyond the social media. Cook, Garside, Levinson, Dupras, &Montori (2010) emphasized that the different approaches available by web based learning (WBL) permit the creative application of online learning for many objectives, contexts and learners. In addition, educators and researchers cannot treat WBL as a single entity or as a panacea. Instead, careful attention must be given to the needs of learners and the learning context in question as they decide whether to use this medium, other media or a combination. In the case of the present study, the emphasis was on creating and using a collaborative tool that would be accessible to a large variety of professionals and family members.

Limitations

A limitation of the current study was the use of an audience of convenience. Participants were enrolled in one of three required courses from two different universities. Another limitation was that the Edublog intervention was one of several course assignments during a sixteen-week period. Participants were required to use and

implement blogging as a course assignment, when this type of communication is usually voluntary and involves free-flowing opinions. Instead, participants were held to specific grading guidelines and timeframes to complete weekly postings. Furthermore, the technology proficiency level of participants' skills were assumed and not measured. Therefore, if one is going to use Edublogs, or other Web 2.0 tools, as a means of instruction, instructors would want to ensure that the use, or command of the technology does not interfere with the participants' ability to complete the required assignment.

Conclusion

This study investigated the use of Edublogs and examined participants' perceptions of its use for communicating transition related information to families. According to the findings of this study and related literature (Ferdig & Trammell, 2004) Edublogs can be beneficial to students by providing legitimate chances to participate in the learning environment, and by providing opportunities for diverse perspectives, both within and outside of the classroom. The experience was generally a beneficial learning opportunity for participants on how to use a tool like Edublogs, beyond the social media, to increase communication with parents and stakeholders about important matters related transition related issues for students with disabilities. If teachers can increase communication with parents about important and relevant issues like transition, it is most likely that they could also increase the opportunities for positive outcomes for student success. Future research in this area is needed to examine collaborative interactions between teachers, families and other professionals actually using Edublogs for transition plan development for students with disabilities. An in-depth investigation of the impact this form of communication would have on the quality of participation of students' with disabilities and their families in the transition process compared to state, or national created checklists. Of utmost importance would be examining if this type of collaboration among stakeholders could yield evidence of improved students' post school outcomes over time.

Geçiş Sürecinde İletişimi Artırmak: Edublog'lar Yardımcı Olabilir mi?

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ÖZET: Bu keşfedici çalışma engelli öğrenciler için geçiş planlarının gelişimini güçlendirmek için üç üniversitedeki lisansüstü derslerde Edublog'ları iş birlikçi bir iletişim aracı olarak kullanımını ve tanıtımını incelemiştir. Katılımcılar Özel Eğitim'de Geçiş ve Yasal Meselelere değinen üç dersten birine kayıtlıdır. Katılımcıların Edubloglar hakkında bilgi, düşünce ve deneyimlerini belirlemek aynı zamanda Edublogların kullanımı ve tanıtımı öncesinde ve sonrasındaki tutumlarını belirlemek üzere ön-test ve son-test verilmiştir. Sonuçlar katılımcıların tutumlarının minimum düzeyde değiştiğini göstermiştir. Buna rağmen, Web 2.0 teknolojisine aşinalık ve kullanımdaki rahatlık öğrencilerle, iş arkadaşlarıyla ve ailelerle iş birliği içerisinde çalışarak zaman ve mekan kısıtlaması olmaksızın engelli öğrenciler için geçiş toplantılarındaki katılımı artırmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: kişiselleştirilmiş geçiş planları, teknoloji, aile, edublog, iletişim.

Geniş Özet

Amaç ve Önem: Birçok gelişmiş ülke okullardaki engelli çocukları desteklemek için yol haritaları belirlemiştir. Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin engelli öğrencileri destekleme yollarından bir tanesi özel eğitim alan her bir engelli öğrencinin 16 yaşına kadar kişiselleştirilmiş bir geçiş planına (KGP) sahip olmasının zorunlu kılınmasıdır. KGP'nin rolü istihdamda, eğitimde, meslek eğitiminde ya da her nerede özgür yaşama becerileri bulunuyorsa orada yetişkinler olarak okuldan bir sonraki okul rolüne olanak tanımak için öğrencilerin akademik ve işlevsel başarılarını artırmaya odaklıdır. Bu dayatmaya bağlı kalarak, engelli öğrenciler ve onların aileleri bu planın gelişiminde okul ve bu alandaki profesyonellerle iş birliği içerisinde çalışacak kritik takım üyeleridir. Tesadüfen bazı çalışmalar okul ve ev arasındaki iş birliğinin çalışmak zorunda olan aileler için uygun olmayan zamanlarda toplantı ayarlamaya çalışan okul personelinin bu isteğiyle kesintiye uğramaktadır. Bu yüzden KGP'nin gelişiminde öğrenci aile işbirliğini teminat altına alacak iletişim kurmak için ve birlikte çalışmak için alternatif ve yenilikçi yollar araştırılmaktadır. Bu keşfedici çalışmanın amacı lisansüstü öğrencilerin engelli öğrencilerin ihtiyaçlarına hitap eden geçişle alakalı meseleler hakkında bilgi paylaşımı konusunda Edublogların kullanım algısını incelemektir. Özellikle katılımcılara zaman ve mekân sınırı tanımaksızın ev, okul ve topluluk arasındaki iletişimi güçlendirmek için kullanılabilir yenilikçi ve işbirlikçi bir aracı

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tanıtmak asıl amaçtır. Edubloglar gibi Web 2.0 araçlarının bilgi paylaşımını nasıl artırdığını anlatarak ve örnek göstererek geleceğin özel eğitim öğretmenlerinin ve diğer profesyonellerin rollerini gerçekleştirmede bu ve bunun gibi seçenekleri göz önünde bulunduracağını umut ediyoruz. Öğretmen yetiştirme programları lisansüstü öğrencilerin profesyonel davranışlarını etkileyecek yenilikçi ve delile dayanan uygulamaları öğrenmek ve keşfetmek için verimli bir zemin hazırlar. Öğretmenler ve diğer okul çalışanları araştırmayı kendi ortamlarına uyararlarsa ve böylesine deneyime dayalı araştırma destekli uygulamaları nasıl uygulamaları konusunda vizyon geliştirirlerse, gelecekte bu tekniklerini sınıflarında uygulamaları oldukça olasıdır.

Yöntem: Bu ön-test ve son-test araştırması 33 lisansüstü öğrencinin Edublogların gelmişle alakalı meselelerde bilgi paylaşımı adına kullanımı hakkında algılarını araştırmaktadır. Bu anlamda katılımcıların Edublogların kullanımı hakkında 10 haftalık bir öğretim almadan önce ve aldıktan sonraki algıları arasındaki farkların tespit edilmesi için karma yöntem yaklaşımı kullanılmıştır. Katılımcılar iki bölümden oluşan bir ölçeği yanıtladılar. İlk bölüm öğrencilerin Edubloglara ilişkin bilgi, düşünce ve deneyimlerini araştırdı. İkinci bölüm katılımcıların Edublogları kullanmanın yararları hakkında tutumlarını değerlendirdikleri 15 madde ve 7'li Likert ölçeğinden oluşmaktaydı. Araştırma soruları ise şu şekildeydi: (a) Edubloglar tanıtıldıktan ve kullanıldıktan sonra katılımcıların Edublogların öğretimde ve öğrenmedeki tutumları değişecek miydi?; ve (b) Edubloglar tanıtıldıktan ve kullanıldıktan sonra katılımcıların öğretme ve öğrenme geçişi alakalı meselelerde Edubloglara ilişkin bilgi, düşünce ve deneyimleriyle ilgili bir farklılık belirtecekler miydi? İlk araştırma sorusu için, veriler SPSS 12.0 kullanarak analiz edildi. İkinci araştırma sorusu için, sonuçlar ana temalar yoluyla rapor haline getirildi.

Bulgular: Bulgular Edublogların kullanımı ve kullanma zamanına ilişkin 15 çoktan seçmeli çift için iki anlamlı fark ortaya koydu. Buna ek olarak açık uçlu sorularla birçok yeni tema ortaya kondu. Temaların bir çoğu Edublogların diğer kişilerle iş birliği içerisinde çalışmak adına anlamlı bir araç olduğuna dair olumluydu.

Tartışma ve Sonuç: Bu çalışma engelli öğrencilerin KGP'sinin gelişimini ilerletebilecek bilgiyi paylaşmak amacıyla iş birlikçi takımlar arasında kullanılabilir bir iletişim aracı olan Edublogların kullanımını ile alakalı ümit veren sonuçlar ortaya koymuştur. Bir çok Web 2.0 teknolojisinin esnek kullanımı sosyal medyanın dışında bağlamlarda da fayda sağlayabilir. Bu çalışmada bir Edublog, pratik, ucuz ve kolay olması sebebiyle lisansüstü öğrencilerin kullanması için okulu, aileyi ve toplumu bir araya getirmek için alternatif bir buluşma yeri olarak tanıtılmış ve kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışmada tanıtılmadan önce bu çalışmadaki katılımcıların bloglarla ilgili çok az ya da hiç bilgisi yoktu. Tanıtıldıktan sonra katılımcılar bu aracı aileler ve diğer okul personeliyle iletişim kurmak için uygulanabilir bir seçenek olarak görmüştür. Araştırmacılar bu aracın tanıtılmasını çok önemli bulmuştur. Çünkü bu yolla

katılımcılar bu aracın ya da geliştirilmiş KGP'lerle alakalı iletişimi sürdürmek için zaman ve mekân bariyerlerini minimize edecek benzerlerinin kullanımının uygunluđuna karar verebilecektir. Aileler ve profesyoneller arasındaki iletişim için alternatif yollar bulmanın temel esprisi engelli öğrencilerin okul sonrası başarılarının belirtilerini görmek olacaktır.

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