

## Design and Implementation Issues of Creating an Educational Website

By Toby Hopkins, 2011

### Design Issues

The internet is massive and full of different information and ideas that can be used in the classroom. Kissane (2009), says the internet can be useful as a(n): interactive resource, good reading material, reference material, communication medium and opportunity for problem solving. Implementing these ideas into the design of a website can be suggested as beneficial for the learning of students.

Designing a website can be lots of fun and the artist within you can be free to do some pretty funky things. However everyone has a different opinion and so what you think might be cool or clever someone else may find annoying. Doing all this work you would like your website to be used successfully and so it is important to have a design that is effective and has as little annoying details as possible for the users.

Structure of websites is very important as users can become quickly frustrated if they cannot find what they are looking for (Bluejay, 2001). It is so simple to close a website and so frustrating the user is something you don't want to do as they will associate the website with a negative experience.

The more neat and simple your website design is, the more professional your website will look (Bluejay, 2001). Being professional is important for teachers inside and outside the classroom and so this professionalism should be implemented in the website.

Credibility is a big issue with websites and if your website does not look professional then you don't appear to users as being a credible source and so your hard work can be dismissed quite quickly. Being a university student, recognising credible resources is an essential skill.

Having a blank background is important as it is easier for the user to read off a blank background (Yola, 2011). It can be a coloured background as long as the text is easy to read off it, although black text on white background is the best (Australian Flexible Learning Framework, 2002). Lots of people find it hard to read off a computer screen already, so it would be stupid and careless to make it even harder for them. Write in short paragraphs, use headings and dotpoints, use appropriate font to make it as readable as possible as most people skim a website rather than reading every word (Macklin, 2004).

Although the education website needs to look professional and not amateur it also needs to be fun. Students are not going to like a website full of just words and so you need to jazz it up with a couple of pictures and include activities or links to other sites that have activities. However pictures should be appropriate to the content and used sparingly (Australian Flexible Learning Framework, 2002).

These are only things that I have tried to adhere to; however there are many more that professionals of web design talk about. It may sound complicated but there are website site creator programs like Weebly and Yola which make it easy for anyone to make professional websites without having any former training. These can be used as tools for educators, like me, who want to engage students actively, and this type of technology supports active teaching.

## Implementation Issues

Technology is ever growing and can be used quite easily to benefit learning in the classroom. However there are serious implementation issues to be considered and addressed. Being professional, earning respect and keeping control are vital values for a teacher. To accomplish this, teachers need their privacy to distant themselves from students (Macgibbon, 2011). Using technology that allows student access to teachers outside school hours, proper precautions have to be taken by the teacher to ensure that there is a difference between their private and professional life. This can be difficult as teachers may leave online footprints of their private lives that students can dig up (Macgibbon, 2011). Also teachers have to decide whether or not to put private contact information visible to students as these could be misused. Another major problem with providing too much information is identity theft, which seems to be an increasing problem worldwide.

A problem with technology in the classroom is that students tend to rely on it and so are “controlled” by it (Jonassen, 1994). Keeping this in mind, the website should be used as a medium to “help learners transcend the limitations of their minds, such as memory, thinking, or problem solving” as said by Jonassen (1994). This is meaning teachers could use website technology to advance student learning processes and push students past learning boundaries, instead of using technology as a knowledge base or a solutions tool. Jonassen (1994) describes it as an “amplification tool”. Brown et al., (1989) and, also imply that learning should be active instead of instrumental and they use learning language to prove this point.

A big issue for teachers is teaching material and copyright issues. There are a lot of great teaching tools, ideas and images to be used and many that can be added in some way to improve an educational website. However these tools, ideas and images have to be used legally, with proper accreditation. This can be problematic, confusing and time consuming; however it needs to be done properly. This isn't all bad though as there is a free organisation called Creative Commons providing licenses for anybody to share educational and thus minimizing the barrier of copyright for educators. Also, as copyright is so important in society and websites are so prevalent, teachers could do activities teaching students about copyright and its application on the internet, using their own website as an example or allowing students to create their own adhering to copyright.

These are issues of implementation that need to be taken into account and there are so many more benefits for technological development in education that I have not mentioned. For example; Macgibbon (2011) says “teachers can seem more approachable online” which can be good for the quiet achiever or the troubled student. She also says that technologies could be used for “real-time parent-teacher conferences; and to facilitate lessons should attendance at school be disrupted by weather conditions” which I feel are great ideas in our busy world today.

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