Wikiversity: a complex space for collaborative learning [edit this space]

Overview

Wikiversity is a wiki (i.e. editable) website dedicated to educational materials and activities. It is a project of the Wikimedia Foundation (which also runs Wikipedia, Wikibooks, Wikimedia Commons, and others), and was launched in August, 2006.

In keeping with Wikimedia's multilingual scope, there are currently 5 individual language Wikiversity projects – in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish. The English Wikiversity is at http://en.wikiversity.org and others can be found at http://www.wikiversity.org. There is also a "beta" wiki to serve as a multi-lingual 'hub' for emerging language projects.

Materials on Wikiversity vary in scope and type. Examples include materials which could be used by a face to face class, or by self-directed learners; collaborative learning projects and activities.

In short, Wikiversity is both a collaborative repository of educational materials, and a space for collaborative learning.

Pedagogy and Epistemology

Wikiversity was set up with no explicit pedagogical method or epistemological framework to be used – apart from the fact that it would take place within a wiki. This implicitly raises questions around how learning works in Wikiversity, and how it is to be facilitated, prompted. The Wikiversity community is experimenting with different ways of providing for learning in the "wiki way" - including discussing, collaborating, and "being bold".

Far left: Discussion at Wikimania 2007 (Photo: Alex S.H. Lin)

Left: Conference discussing Wikipedia and education (Photo: Frank Schulenburg)

Wikiversity can help promote a discursive paradigm of knowledge creation, and explore how wikis can be used in educational contexts.

Research

Wikiversity was launched with an open question around whether it would include research, and how. (Wikipedia, for example, explicitly excludes original research, on the basis that it is inappropriate for an encyclopedia – however, Wikiversity's remit is wider than that of Wikipedia.) During its first year, the Wikiversity and wider Wikimedia community collaboratively created a set of policies around research in Wikiversity, and how it should be included and/or managed.

There is already some research underway on Wikiversity – including a "bloom clock" of distributed data on what flowers are currently blooming (and where) around the world, as well as research on how Wikiversity itself is being developed and how it can improve.

Left: The "Bloom Clock" project is a distributed research project to develop a record of what plants are blooming at any given time in a particular location around the world. (Photo: André Karwath)
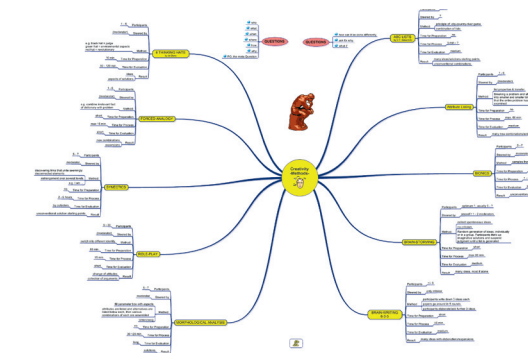
Using and improving Wikiversity

Wikiversity is an openly editable repository of educational materials, and if you have materials that you think would be useful to someone else, you are encouraged to add them to Wikiversity. (If you need help with this, please contact me through the links provided below.) But Wikiversity also needs learners and other users to develop a better understanding of its work, and to strengthen the community around its materials and their development.

Left: Wikiversity materials can include anything from quizzes to mind-maps (pictured) to monographs to sound recordings - and many more. (Image: Franz Kies)

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