Should WebQuests be Included in Chapter 12 of *e-Learning and the Science of Instruction*?

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Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) includes many different applications of technology to support learning. Clark and Mayer state that CSCL refers to "collaborative engagements among teams of two to five members using synchronous and/or asynchronous tool facilities in ways that support an instructional goal" (2008). The technology involved supports the communication and collaboration between members working toward a common objective. WebQuests are websites that present a task, communicate the expectations of the task, organize the resources necessary to complete the task, and explain how the product will be assessed. WebQuests are not inherently examples of CSCL, but WebQuest can be designed to incorporate many if not all of the principles of CSCL that Clark and Mayer discuss in Chapter 12: Learning Together Virtually of their book *e-Learning and the Science of Instruction*. I would support including a discussion of what WebQuests are, and how they could be used to organize a learning activity that uses CSCL in Chapter 12 of *e-Learning and the Science of Instruction*.

In the section titled "What is Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL)?" Clark and Mayer discuss the difference between group goals and individual goals. They state that product assessment should focus on group goals, while learning should focus on individual goals (2008). Dodge states that a good WebQuest will incorporate both individual and group accountability and that "conversations about how to improve the group's effectiveness" will be built into the process (2001). The WebQuest can be a useful tool to organize learning for both group and individual goals.

In the section titled "Collaborative Structures and CSCL Outcomes", there could be a discussion of WebQuests. Clark and Mayer state that "a structured collaborative assignment is one critical condition to maximize benefits from group work" (2008). Both the structured controversy model and the problem-based model can be used in a WebQuest format. Dodge discusses the need to organize group members into roles that promote interaction and positive interdependence within the WebQuest format (2001). WebQuests that are capable of developing collaborative working skills employ group based strategies (Abbitt & Ophus, 2008).

In the section titled “Factors that Make a Difference: Overview”, Clark and Mayer discuss the need for skills training and the use of collaborative structures that ensure interdependence among members of a team (2008). WebQuests that are effective do this. Dodge points out that good WebQuests promote positive interdependence such that “learners perceive that they cannot succeed without each other” (2001). Dodge also states that “most children (and many adults) need to be taught how to work together” (2001). Students report that “they perceived the ultimate benefit of developing collaborative work skills” when they used WebQuests (Abbitt & Ophus, 2008). WebQuests are tools that develop collaborative group skills and the students using WebQuests perceive that they must collaborate in order to succeed.

WebQuests are an application of CSCL and should be discussed in Chapter 12 of *e-Learning and the Science of Instruction*. WebQuests (if designed properly) can use all of the components of CSCL to promote effective learning and the generation of quality products through collaboration both synchronously and asynchronously.

References

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