eTeacher 2.0

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1. Introduction

This report is a summary and discussion on my experience with the eTeacher - PD course. The course has been carried out alongside my normal work. This means that some of the topics haven been executed in the optimal way.

Is it possible to implement the new Web 2.0 tools in my teaching?
Will it change the classic classroom teaching?
Will it improve the student's ability to learn?

1.1 Scope

Given my small knowledge about teaching theories, I will not be referencing theoreticians within that field. My knowledge is based on my many years as a student – knowing which way of learning worked and what did not. In addition to this I use my own experience from the three years working as a teacher at a high-school.

2. About me and the way I teach

In order to understand this report you should know some of my background. Firstly I've only worked as a teacher the last three years. Before this I worked as a graphical designer, and consultant. This means that I'm used to work in teams.

In my time as a student, which ended in 2007 with a master degree, I experienced many different types of teachings, and team work.

It is my experience that when the students work in teams they are able to focus on what they are best at. In the subject (Communication and information technology) I teach this usually means that the girls are best at the theoretical parts, and the boys are best at the technology part. I therefor create themes throughout the school year, which usually end in a large project where they are to use their knowledge acquired throughout this theme and the previous ones.

In order for a group to function well there are some basic requirements for it to work. The group must have the following

- *Balanced roles*
- *A clear purpose and accepted goals*
- *Openness and confrontation*
- *Support and trust*
- *Teamwork and conflict*
- *Healthy administrative procedures*
- *Appropriate management style*
- *Regular evaluation*
- *Individual growth*
- *Good relation with other groups*
- *Good communication*

 (Munk-Madsen, 1996)

When most of the above can be said of a group it usually last throughout the time I teach them.

3. Statistics and framing

An important part of working with the eTeacher topics is the ability to evaluate if it worked. This I usually do by evaluating the student's hand-ins, but given that the eTeacher topics work with specific tools this is not optimal.

I have therefor have been forced to study how to create surveys. Most of my knowledge is from the book "Kvalitet i skolen" (quality in school) by Mads Hermansen. It consists of two parts, "Work on the school" and "Management tasks". I will not go into detail with the book other to mention that it is the source of my knowledge.

When working with questionnaires I have noticed that the responders tend to answer negatively if the questions are not framed correctly. In the first topic I asked the most directly and got fairly good answers but there wasn't much room for interpretation. In topic two I

framed the questions, which gave me better knowledge of the student's previous experience, and which parts of Google Docs they used.

4. eTeacher topics

4.1 Topic 1

In this topic I worked with sharing knowledge. I had a number of ideas on how to do this. Podcasts, vodcasts, blogs, and personal or group webpages where just a few of the possibilities.

Original it was Enzo and my idea that we would use the same students to this and topic 2. Unfortunately this was more difficult than we expected, and we abandoned the idea.

My choice of students fell on the class "KomDes"1.g – which is an abbreviation of Kommunikation / IT & Design (Communication / information technology and design). This class is our experimental class, where all students have a MacBook Pro and an iPod touch. Besides the IT equipment we have devised a way to include these new possibilities into their education.

KomDes 1.g would therefore be perfect for this topic. Given the time restraints I only asked them to create a weblog and post some of their old work, created during the autumn. If time permitted it I wanted them to customize the weblog according to some of the theories of Jackob Nielsen.

My goal with the project was for the students to reflect on sharing their work online. This did not happen. If they had reflected on this I would have expected the survey to look different. In my knowledge I expect to use more time on a given project if it has to be shared. The student's only shared their old work, which may not have given them the experience I expected.

In this assignment I used parts of the book "Choosing Web 2.0 Tools for Learning and "Teaching in a Digital World", "Fortællestruktur i hypertekster og multimedier" and "Interaktivitet & interaktive medier" – see bibliography for complete reference.

As a follow-up to this topic I have asked the students to revisit their weblogs with the intent to use the weblog for all future projects. In between topic1 and now they have received lectures in webdesign, interaction design and Photoshop. This has given them a much better knowledge on how to use a weblog. The weblogs now look better, but I'm afraid that they are yet to realize that maintaining a weblog will require more work.

4.2 Topic 2

In topic 2 I choose other students that in the first topic. These students have average IT skills. The reason for picking these is mainly that they see computers and software as tools. But selecting them I have to convince them, that a given software or internet service is better than the one they are used to use.

Topic2 coincided with the start of a new theme. This gave me the opportunity to introduce the internet service Google Doc in the beginning, and "force" them to use it throughout the entire theme. The goal of the theme was to find a report on mst.dk, read it and create a summarization for at specific target group. The summarization was to be in form of a small information folder. Alongside this they were to write a small report where they discus target groups, design theories, and other related theories.

The students' did all use Google docs. Their hand is was not better or worse than the other classes who had the same theme. After our evaluation I've discussed if their work have been easier or harder using Google docs. There were general consensuses that it's been easier. The main problem with working simultaneously on the same document is to structure the content. Meaning that they would have to divide the report into sections where each group member would write their par. This is ok for well-structured people, if you are part of a group with low work ethics there is a good chance that the final report will contain temporary texts or phrases which should have been removed. It is therefore important that the document is maintained be a single individual or pars of the groups. This is to insure a common language, wording and layout of the report. When working with normal office software like MS Office the report is usually combined by a single person who receives single documents from each group member.

After this topic the students' have started on their exam projects. A lot of them have chosen Google Docs as a collaborate tool to their project. I have advised them to create two document one temporary and one for their final report.

The reason Google Docs work as well as it did, is mainly because of its simplicity. It's not as advanced as MS Word in fact it lacks many of the automatic features like: creating a TOC, managing sources, etc. But it clearly gains popularity for collaborate features which Word does not have. Another point of popularity is its price; free, and you are ready to go given that you are connected to the internet. There are competing products online but still not as possible. I personally think that Microsoft has a good chance in gaining popularity largely giving their large user base on offline software installs.

This leads me to ask the question "How does this change my teaching?" My answer is unfortunately a vague one. In an ideal situation I would be invited into each group writing a paper or report. This would give me the possibility to oversee what the students' are working on, comment on their work before they hand it in. The problem with this situation is that the students may feel that I as any time could raise my finger and claim that they were not working hard enough or starting to grade their work before it is finished. This paranoia would lead them to create other documents which I don't have access to, or possibly to drop online collaboration.
I therefore think the best solution is to give the students the possibility to invite me to see what they have written in order to evaluate or aid them in writing.

In this topic I've worked with the following books: "Kvalitet i skolen - praksis", "Den reflekterende prakmatiker", "Strategisk Projektledelse", " Fortællestruktur i hypertekster og

multimedier " and "Choosing Web 2.0 Tools for Learning and Teaching in a Digital World" – see bibliography for complete reference.

4.3 Topic 3

This topic was planned so it coincided with the end of another theme. The theme was web design and how to create a good webpage, how to promote it etc. Just before I ran the remote learning session, the students had learned how in principle they could design and write an html page. My main problem with their work was that it lacked imagination. They mostly used my code examples or created simple web pages like the ones we saw in the early days of World Wide Web.

My goal of the remote learning session was twofold:

1. The have to create a web design in Adobe Photoshop, and share this online
2. To evaluate a previous theme

My choice of service fell on Google's Facebook alternative Google Plus or Google +. I had previous discussed what to use. On to plus side most of the students already have a Facebook account, and know a lot about the service. On the minus side was all the distractions Facebook have, ads, friends, games and so on. Google + is a new service which went public September 2011. The service added new features that Facebook didn't have. One important one of these was Circles. Circles are a way of organizing friends or contacts. If a contact is in a circle he or she would not be able to see posts posted to other than this specific circle. Given that Google+ is quite a new service meant that not many advertisers other distractions are on the service. Lastly Google+ is an intricate part of the Google ecosystem which means that it's well integrated with Google Docs, YouTube, Google Talk, etc.

I worked with my colleagues and planner to get the students to work from home for an entire day. Their subjects for the particular day was "samfundsfag", "matematik" and "Kom/IT" after a little shuffling the students ended with 4 lectures of "samfundsfag" where they should read and summarize a text, afterward they should logon to Google+ and my lectures would start.

Difficulties
I was the first time for many of the students used Google+, and it gave some problems. First of all not all the students added me during the weekend. This meant that they were not in the right circle and didn't have access to my instructions. This however was solved during the morning and most students were ready by noon.

I created a post where all students were to reply to in order to confirm that they were present. They were then to start their working on their designs. My plan was then to create "hangouts" with groups in order for us to evaluate their work on the previous theme. To my surprise a hangout uses quite a lot of internet bandwidth. Who would imagine that 4 video and audio streams would create problems... I therefor abandoned that and let the students work.

At the end of the four lectures they started to post pictures of their designs. It was then my intention for them to answer a survey (see topic 3 appendix 1 & 2) and then end the lectures.

To my surprise the students started to comment on the different designs. Two hours or so, past the end of the lectures, the discussions ended. Unlike some of the discussions I've seen on their Facebook pages, the students argued with technical jargon and the tone was quite friendly.

This behavior mimics some of what I wish to see in my classrooms. I often ask the students to present their work and ask for comments on the work and we discuss how to improve upon the design. Unfortunately it is not uncommon that only a few students participate in these discussions, and when nonparticipating students are asked the answer usually is "I don't know" or "it's ok".
Using a social media like Google+ apparently gave the silent students an opportunity to raise their virtual voice and comment on other students work. I don't know why this is. The students know each other and the class functions well. It is not my feeling that there is an obvious pecking order, which may hinder their free speech.

After I handed in topic 3, I've decided to continue using Google+ for the theme. I created a follow-up lecture where we met up in the classroom discussed how they could improve their designs. They were then asked to create a new design and again post them to Google+. I encouraged them to comment on the designs that were posted. This gave some discussions, but mainly this time they used Ideas they got from each other's work. Here is an example of the progression of two of the students:

First lecture   Second lecture
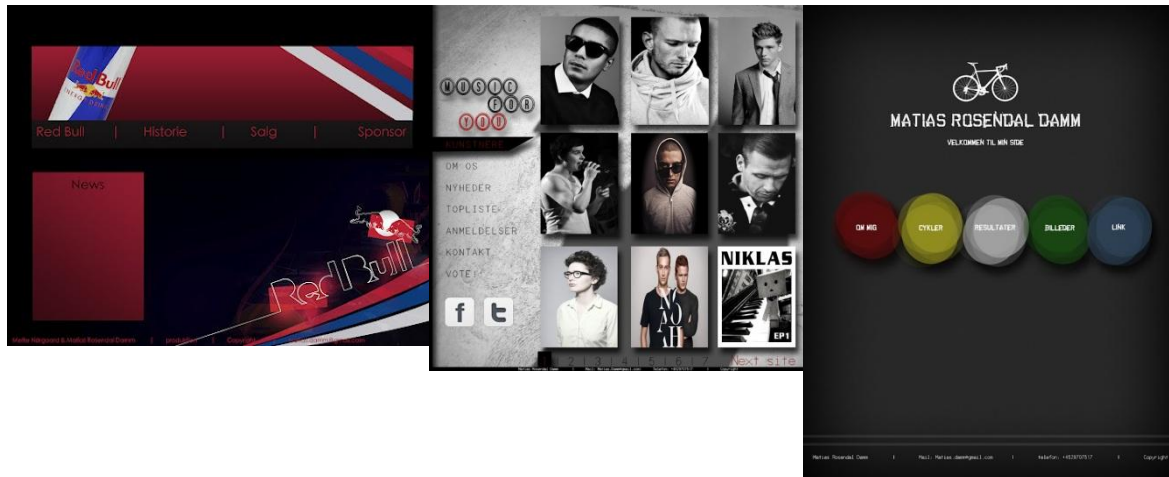
First lecture   Second lecture

In the last example the progression is the most clear. In the first lecture the design is mostly based on my example, just with another theme. In the second lecture the student have created two designs excels toward something almost professional.

When I ended the theme about internet and web design I ended the work with the thread on Google+, but the students post new designs from time to time. When people comment on them I participate in the discussion if my time permits me to.

By looking at this topic, it is obvious that the students' likes social networks. I'm convinced that there lies huge potential in them. The problem is that it requires more planning that normal lectures do. With my first steps into Google+ I've discovered that threads live much longer that traditional exercises dose. This is mainly because of the feedback the other users give. This requires me to rethink a theme or lectures so that they are more or less open-ended. One way of exploiting this, at least in the subjects I teach, could be to create competitions. Once a month I could give some basic rules and see what are returned.

In this topic I've worked with the following books: "*Kom i gang med fjernundervisning*", "*Kvalitet i skolen*", "*Fortællestruktur i hypertekster og multimedier*", "*Interaktivitet & interaktive medier*", "*Choosing Web 2.0 Tools for Learning and Teaching in a Digital World*", "*Den reflekterende prakmatiker*" and "*Multimediernes Tid*" – see bibliography for complete reference.

5. Summary and discussion

After participating in this course I've learned that there are new ways of teaching. It is important to embrace the new technologies.

I believe that the web 2.0 can be used to change the classroom. The time where students hand in paper copies of essays are over. When we are moving towards a digitized word we open up new possibilities. Some of the have been covered in the three topics I've worked with.

Sharing knowledge, in relation to the internet, has been with us since the beginning. Everyone can create a website and share knowledge. I personally have always shared project reports on my personal website. A weblog is just a simple website which makes is incredibly easy to share thoughts, ideas or projects. Basically sharing could be called Web 1.0. Web 2.0 adds a new layer to the internet, it is now the norm for everybody to comment on ideas, projects, etc. they might find interesting. People share tons of personal information on social media sites like Facebook where it's there for everyone to see.

When we get used to sharing everything on large sites like Facebook, or at Google there is a chance that this information can be used against us. Right now advertisers can create a campaign to a very specific target audience and target you. Many would argue that if I search for a new car it's natural that I get adverts about cars. This might be right, but in order to do this the large companies like Google and Facebook store information about you. This might include the drunken post you wrote to an old friend on Facebook. It might be the pictures you shared on Picasa from your child's first birthday. We should be aware of this, and when moving our students towards social media, and sharing this might give problems. I know for a fact that several of my students have been warned about using copyrighted music in their videos, and rightly so, but they are not aware of this – it's just natural to use the music they like.

Web2.0 and education can be a match made in heaven. Web 2.0 can add spice to traditional education. It is just important to plan ahead, be aware of what might happen if a project is move from a closed environment to an open online. I had this discussion with several of my coworkers, can we replace traditional education with virtual? And is can Web 2.0 be used for everyone.
I would imagine that it would be hard to replace my lectures with virtual ones. My course is partly a theoretical one, and partly a hands-on. I my course should be converted to a virtual one it might be done this way: My theoretical lectures could be recorded and posted online. The discussion could be move to a chat or Facebook. The hands-on experience with software and product design can again be recorded and posted online. Unfortunately there are many of the aspects that can't be converted. The personal interaction between me and my students is the most obvious. Moving to a virtual form everything takes much more time, and requires much more discipline from the students.
There is however things we can use Web 2.0 for. I think the asynchronous aspects have numerous possibilities. I could for example record an introduction to a topic and ask that the

students watch it before the lecture. This will prepare them for, and set them in the right mindset for asking questions. I think that my Google+ experience in topic 3 shows possibilities.

What can we expect of the future? We are now edging towards the end of the Web2.0 era. What Web 3.0 will be is still under discussion. One idea is:

The Artificially Intelligent Web 3.0. Many people ponder the use of advanced artificial intelligence as the next big breakthrough on the web. One of the chief advantages of social media is that it factors in human intelligence.

(Nations)

Another is

The Web 3.0 Semantic Web. There is already a lot of work going into the idea of a semantic web, which is a web where all information is categorized and stored in such a way that a computer can understand it as well as a human. Many view this as a combination of artificial intelligence and the semantic web. The semantic web will teach the computer what the data means, and this will evolve into artificial intelligence that can utilize that information.

(Nations)

Or this

The Ever-Present Web 3.0. Not so much a prediction of what the Web 3.0 future holds so much as the catalyst that will bring it about, the ever-present Web 3.0 has to do with the increasing popularity of mobile Internet devices and the merger of entertainment systems and the Web.

(Nations)

All ideas sound plausible, but I think that: "The ever-present Web 3.0" is a likely scenario. Our students will always be online. This could be very distracting for us teachers, but it might also be beneficial if we use the possibilities. The move we make towards integrating Web 2.0 in the classroom will undoubtedly pave the way for integrating Web 3.0

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