Peer Production and Academia: Faculty Perception and Practices about Wikipedia

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Panel 25: Peer production and open collaboration: revisiting closure, stabilization and black boxing through unfinished artefacts

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Research topic

- Present initiatives: open access publication, open research, citizen science, etc.
- Peer production and science: similarities and differences

Research questions:

Are peer production and science compatible?

How is Wikipedia perceived by university faculty?
Methods

Qualitative: 12 interviews to faculty members

Quantitative: online survey with 50 questions to all faculty members of two Spanish universities (913 valid responses)

Descriptive analysis, statistical relationships, cluster analyses, structural equation modeling

Variables: attitudes and practices towards Wikipedia as function of personal, professional, institutional and social factors

Blog: http://oer.uoc.edu/wiki4HE/
Results (descriptive analysis)

1. Wikipedia is mostly seen as a useful tool for teaching but actual teaching use is scarce. Only 9% have used it (mostly for preparing teaching materials).

2. Most faculty are regular users for information seeking (both for personal and professional matters: 60%). Though few of them edit (5,5%).

3. Unexpected rate of registered users: 13,5%. Catalan pop.: 0,4%.

4. Most faculty don’t recommend it to students (46%). Only 27% do.

5. Quality is mostly considered positively (updated, reliable). But articles are not seen as complete.

6. Trust in editing/reviewing/publishing system is not clear. Little knowledge?

7. Most faculty think the use of Wikipedia is not well considered by colleagues. They think colleagues don’t use it much.
Results (correlations)

Factors correlated with the teaching use of Wikipedia:

1. Hard sciences and engineering correlate with higher teaching use and better quality perception.

2. Academic position, age, teaching experience and PhD are not relevant. Slight gender correlation.

3. Colleagues as a strong role model – both for teaching use and positive assessment.

4. High correlation with the use of other 2.0 tools.

5. Teaching use correlates with quality perception.
Results (cluster analysis)

Cluster 1: ACTIVE (233)
- Mostly men
- Part time teachers
- Engineering and hard sciences (STEM)
- Create and share open resources
- Many edit Wikipedia and are registered users
- Cite Wikipedia and see good quality

Cluster 2: FRIENDLY (253)
- They use Wikipedia for preparing their teaching
- Not for teaching activities with students
- Not against students using it

Cluster 3: LOW (153)
- Low use of Wikipedia for teaching
- Frontier between clusters 1 and 4?

Cluster 4: RELUCTANT (218)
- Mostly women (slightly)
- Full time and part time teachers
- Not in STEM fields
- They do not create or share open resources
- Low (passive) use of Wikipedia
- No active use (editing)
- Never cite Wikipedia
- They see bad quality
Final remarks

• Colleagues as strong role models: even quality perception depends heavily on peers

• Private use though public silence: Wikipedia is seen as not belonging to scientific culture

• Active faculty are also involved in other professional cultures

• Different cultures within academia/science: disciplines matter!

• Teaching uses of Wikipedia do not depend on some factors traditionally associated with 2.0 tools