2nd International Conference on Higher Education Advances, HEAd´16, 21-23 June 2016, València, Spain

Online Peer Assessment: Method and Digital Technologies

Selma Santos Rosa[a]*, Clara Pereira Coutinho[b], Maria Assunção Flores[b]

[a]Universidade Federal do Paraná, 426, Doutor João Maximiano, Jandaia do Sul, Brazil, 86900-000
[b]Universidade do Minho, Campus de Gualtar, 4710-057 Braga, Portugal

Abstract

In this research, we undertake a systematic review of literature about Online Peer Assessment (OPA) in higher education, mediated by Digital Information and Communication Technology (DICT). We identify their optional and central characteristics and we map out practices (procedures and DICT) which can be transversal, adaptable and applied in several curriculum units and education regimes. The results indicate the use of OPA as a strategy that boosts "assessment for learning". The methods of assessment and the kinds of DICT used indicate directions for greater involvement and responsibility from the part of the student in his/her learning. Existing literature identifies the need to develop students' skills, proving them with opportunities for self-assessment and peer assessment on a regular basis through constructive feedback. From the results obtained, OPA is seen as a cognitive tool, contributing to the building of knowledge and to reflection about learning. Issues for further reflection are also identified such as the creative development of assessment methods with a focus on diversity and innovation in order to enhance students' learning and academic results, taking into account their learning needs in face of the expectations of current and future education and the demands of society.

---

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +55 41 3360-5000
  E-mail address: selmadossantosrosa@gmail.com

1. Introduction

This article has a component linked to the assessment processes, in particular in higher education, either with regard to its functions, procedures and methods used. Traditionally, the evaluative practices in higher education include written tests or exams, with great emphasis on the classification. These tests or exams are naturally suitable in certain contexts and to achieve certain goals, but there are authors who call attention to the need for diversification and innovation of assessment practices in order to enhance learning and academic results. Empirical studies have shown that the use of alternative methods provides a more effective and motivating learning. The way in which the assessment is operationalized influences the motivation and learning of students, being seen as "a tool for learning" (Flores et al., 2014). With this point of view, there are studies that report their relevance, but highlight the connection between alternative methods of assessment and aspects related to the students' autonomy and the role of feedback, and we highlight the Online Peer Assessment (OPA) as an example.

In the literature, there are indications that OPA, as an alternative assessment method, is gaining a significant position in higher education, being one of its proposals to increase student-student, student-teacher and student-content interactions through constructive feedback, as well as involve the student in the process of assessing their own learning. Reported in a wide range of knowledge areas, OPA has been encouraged by assuring anonymity of authorship more efficiently by allowing students to express freely their ideas about the work of their peers and reduce restrictions related to time and location; by promoting a more honest and fair assessment; for helping to resolve issues related to the workload of teachers and classes with large numbers of students; and allowing to save time with classification (Issa, 2012; Bouchoucha & Wozniak, 2010; Dominguez et al., 2012).

As discussed above, in this article we have intend to make a contribution to the state of the art. We present results of a Systematic Review of the Literature (SRL), which aimed to identify the Digital Information and Communication Technologies (DICT) and the assessment methods used in OPA strategies in higher education. For this, we question: What are the Digital information and Communication Technologies (DICT) used in OPA practices in higher education? How does the training of peers occur? What are the assessment methods used in the OPA?

2. Methodology

The present research consists in the realization of a SRL, as shown below:

2.1 Protocol for the Systematic Review of the Literature

For the purposes of the SRL, we have included articles available in the databases SCOPUS, ISI Web of Science and ACM Digital Library. For the search, we have defined the following keywords: "Peer assessment" and "Higher Education" and, from the results obtained, we read of the articles found (n = 118, from which: SCOPUS = 37, Web of Science = 54 and ACM = 27), with the porpuse of identifying those relating to ICT. The search was conducted between the months of January and March 2015 and included researches between 2005 and 2015.

2.2 Criteria for inclusion and exclusion

From this first survey (n=118), presented in the previous sub-section, we have performed an initial review of the adequacy of the articles related with DICT and, as a result, we have pre-selected 35 articles, 23 were excluded and remained a total of 12 articles. The main reasons for the exclusions were: articles with different titles, but with the presentation of the same experience with OPA; with a focus on basic education; the same article in two different databases; assessment of the results of OPA, but not described; describing what DICT were used for, but not describing the procedures of OPA; and with insufficient descriptions for the understanding of the procedures of OPA.

2.3 Characterization of the Documentary Corpus

In table 1 we present the documentary corpus of this research: