

**The Tensions of Transformation in Three Cross-Institutional Wikibook Projects:  
Looking Back Twenty Years to Today**

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## **The Tensions of Transformation in Cross-Institutional Wikibook Creation, Critique, and Collaboration: Looking Back Twenty Years to Today**

Imagine a Web page that anyone with access to the Internet can edit, not just read (Evans, 2006). Now imagine if that editing process extended well beyond that page to an entire chapter or book. If successful, you have envisioned the birth of the wikibook. A wikibook is one of many so-called Web 2.0 technologies that are now finding their ways into K-12 and college classrooms. Wikis are collaborative writing spaces wherein a learner can perpetually tinker with ideas as well as remold and share them.

The use of wikis, and in particular, wikibooks, is highly linked to the educational climate of today. It is a culture of participatory learning that has been building for the past two decades. In addition to learning participation, Wiki-related projects provide opportunities for learning transformation when they expose learners to new points of view or perspectives as well as opportunities for critical reflection and examination of one's assumptions (About.com, 2008; Mezirow, 1991). While not all wiki-related activities in the classroom are transformational experiences, many of them are. In this paper, we discuss the tensions and issues surrounding cross-institutional collaboration in a wikibook project. Our experiences stem from three separate attempts to build wikibooks in cross-institutional settings. The tensions and issues we discuss relate to instructional decisions, collaboration considerations, technology factors, knowledge construction and sense of community, and the overall processes and procedures related to the wikibook project. We also provide some advice and guidelines for other instructors who might be grappling with one or more of these tensions in a wikibook project in higher education or other settings. When these various issues are resolved and proper instructional scaffolds are in place, transformational change such as new perspectives or understandings might result. However, the success may depend on the type of students, the design of the wikibook project, the level of course, the number of participants, and many other factors.

### **The Climate of 2008**

This year, 2008, though just begun, is already a year marked by myriad politicians and their followers arguing for change. The word change can be seen repeatedly on televised debates and then replayed on CNN.com and discussed in political blogs, online forums, and newspapers and magazines. In most cases, these calls for change are not just for a simple changing of the guard from one president or administration to another, but for deep and lasting transformative change in how political campaigns are run, the issues that are addressed, and the requirements for an effective leader of this country.

Such calls for transformative change, however, are not restricted to legislative offices and government agencies. Across educational settings, too, transformation is in the air. It seems that everyone is focused on it; almost as if it is a necessity for schools and institutions of higher learning. Much of these pleas and pronouncements arise from concerns that youth are dropping out of schools and colleges due to dull curricula and a lack of meaningful and engaging activities (Cassner-Lotto & Wright Benner, 2006). From such perspectives, there is a deep disconnect between what learners prefer in terms of tasks assigned, resources to accomplish those tasks, and the assessment of that work.

