



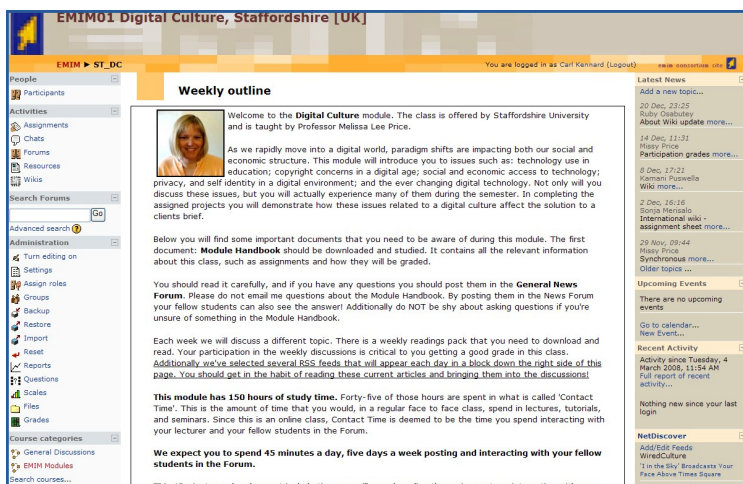
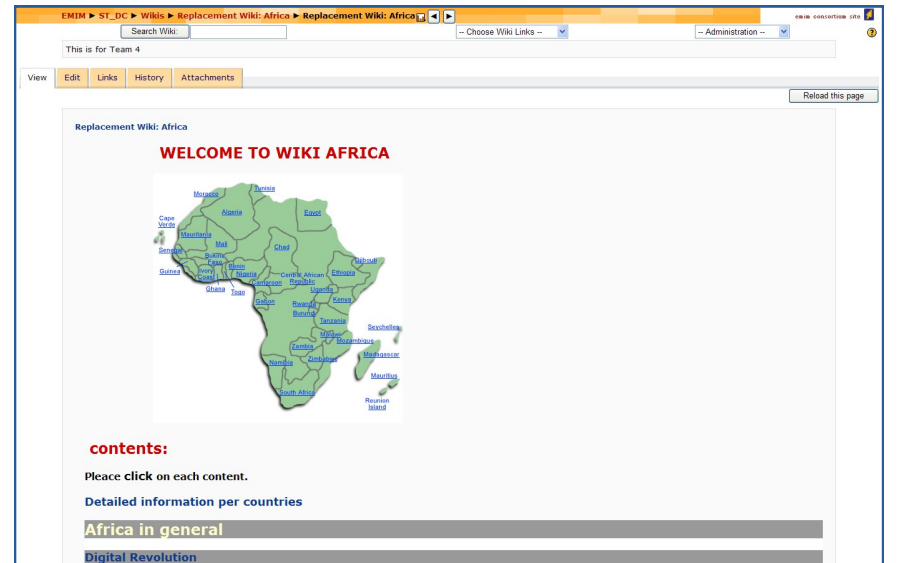
# Differences in Male and Female Wiki Participation during Educational Group Projects

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This project focused on differences in male and female student participation rates during collaborative wiki-based group projects and how this could affect the technology's educational use. It investigated volume of student participation in the wiki based on gender.

Wikis enable users to edit web pages without requiring prior HTML web design or computer coding experience. Pages are edited via a web-based interface and without requiring the purchase or installation of client machine software. Being **Open Source** software, educators can use wikis for free providing they have available server space.



## Methods

To achieve its aim the study examined wikis used to deliver a part-time **postgraduate** course to students based in a number of different European countries. Data was gathered from two classes of distance learners studying for a European Masters in Interactive Multimedia. The course ran using a **Moodle** virtual learning environment to deliver learning materials and provide educational software tools via a central URL. The course is taught purely online, with no face-to-face contact between students and lecturers.

## Results

Participation rates for female students in the group projects **exceeded** those of their male counterparts in all of the indicators chosen for the study. In both years female students produced higher volumes of page edits and greater average numbers of edits made by learners contributing to the wiki.

In **both** groups female edits exceeded those of males, the gap between the genders growing from the first cohort to the second, despite the percentage of male students making a contribution to the final artifact exceeding that of females. In 2006/7 female editors made **81.8%** more edits on average than males. In 2007/8 the gap widened, females making **218%** more edits than their male counterparts.

## Conclusions

From the data collected the following conclusions were made:

- The overall volume of work increased in the second year, both in terms of pages produced and edits made to the final project.
- Females made more edits overall than males during both years.
- The average number of edits made by female editors exceeded those of males.

The results show an encouraging overall increase in students' willingness to use wikis over the two years, possibly due to growing familiarity with the technology through the rise of sites such as **Wikipedia**. Results suggest when lecturers use wikis female students may make more effective use of the technology, outperforming their male counterparts.

Findings demonstrating greater levels of female productivity match the results of previous studies into **asynchronous technology** and the higher participation rates support research claiming females are more motivated to work during online courses. Using wikis may not suit the learning styles of males and could create a disadvantageous scenario, hindering their progress in comparison to females during summative assessment.

Average number of edits per active male/female editor 2006/7	
Average No. edits per Male Editor	17.6
Average No. edits per Female Editor	32

Average number of edits per active male/female editor 2007/8	
Average No. edits per Male Editor	51.6
Average No. edits per Female Editor	164.1