Supporting learner engagement in the process of undertaking self-directed inquiry
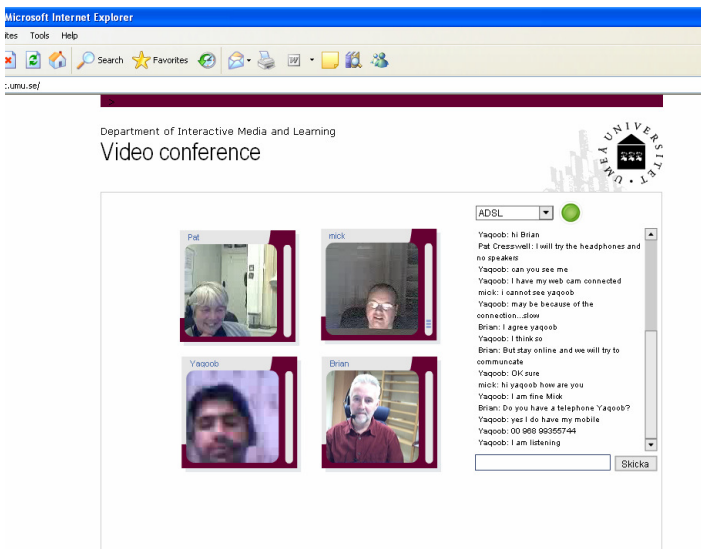
Commenced: 2005

What is it?

This project aims to promote learner autonomy through supporting learner engagement in the process of undertaking self-directed inquiry. The context for this project is the dissertation module of the international Msc in e-Learning, Multimedia and Consultancy (ELMAC). This module involves supporting students in the process of undertaking self-directed inquiry in relation to teaching and learning situations involving the use of ICT.

What is involved?

The students work in an online learning environment as part of a student-centred approach to open and flexible learning that involves local and independent study in addition to international and inter-dependent study as part of a wider learning community. In particular we are experimenting with web-based group video conference applications to support virtual group seminars. We are especially interested in exploring what new opportunities are afforded for promoting the international dimension of the course collaboration with colleagues and students in Nijmegen.

The screen shot above is of a seminar between participants in Sheffield, Bradford, Umeå and Oman using a variety of tools (at times impromptu!) to establish communication.

Why is the project important to the CETL and the University?

These developments have involved working with students in international contexts with the aim of developing their knowledge and understanding of educational research methodologies and the subsequent application of these to teaching and learning situations that involve the use of new technologies. In relation to these contexts, internationalization is seen as a dynamic process that is closely related to the idea of internationalism as an attitude of mind and an outlook on life, philosophy, academia and the global community. The promotion of learner autonomy is seen as central to supporting learner engagement. With regard to this aspect the notion of "relational autonomy" involving social inter-relationships and implying choice or agency on the part of the learner provides some further guiding principles.

What do you hope the project will achieve?

The major goal of this project is to enhance the quality of teaching and of the student learning experience by promoting learner autonomy. This process is informed by pedagogical research and underpinned by research-based practice. A further aim of the project is dissemination to a wider community of colleagues who are interested in advancing scholarship in teaching and learning in the university and beyond.

What impact do you hope the project will have?

The initial impact will be on the international Msc in e-Learning, Multimedia and Consultancy (ELMAC) which involves around 15 colleagues and over 70 students and active alumni at the present time. Wider impact will be achieved through dissemination as colleagues adapt any of the principles, approaches and methods, which they find of relevance, to their own local contexts.

Sheffield Hallam University

SHARPENS YOUR THINKING

Future Developments

This project is part of an ongoing development that is linked to interests in working with doctoral students in international contexts, in which a number of the ELMAC students have become involved. The continual enhancement of the quality of the course is supported by a learning, teaching and assessment (LTA) Team Fellowship which has enabled the organisation of an annual course conference, which is student led.

Links

Course web site:
MSc in e-Learning, Multimedia and Consultancy

http://www.shu.ac.uk/msce-learning/

Web publications:
Conditions for achieving communication, interaction and collaboration in e-learning environments, *elearningeuropa.info*, 15 August 2005 [WWW document] URL
http://www.elearningeuropa.info/index.php?
page=doc&doc_id=6494&doclng=6&menuzone=0&focus=1

Working on educational research methods with Masters students in an international online learning community, *University of Sydney database on Research-Led Teaching and the Scholarship of Teaching*: [WWW document] URL

http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/RLT/examples/search.cfm?
generalSearch=Hudson&type=any&search=1

Research-Based Practice: on the relationship between action research and design research in the context of the development of an international on-line MSc program, *LERU Invitation Seminar on Research-Based Teaching in HE*, League of European Research-Intensive Universities, University of Helsinki, 22-23 March 2005, pp. 37-39. [WWW document] URL

http://www.helsinki.fi/ktl/yty/leru-registration/index.htm

Developing an open and flexible networked learning community at doctoral level across Europe, MSOR Connections, Vol. 5, No 1. [WWW Document] URL

http://mathstore.ac.uk/newsletter/feb2005/pdf/ntf.pdf

Academic journal articles:
Hudson, B., Hudson, A. and Steel, J. (2006) Orchestrating interdependence in an international online learning community*, British Journal of Educational Technology* (In press).

Hudson, B., Owen, D. and van Veen, K. (2006) Working on educational research method with Masters students in an international online learning community, *British Journal of Educational Technology* (In press).

Related work:
Hudson, B., Keifer, S., Laanpere, M. and Rugeli, J. (2005) eLearning in Higher Education: Proceedings of Intensive Program ELHE, 1-11 July 2004. Linz: Universitätswerlag Rudolf Trauner. [WWW Document] URL

http://www.phlinz.at/typo3/fileadmin/paedak_upload/technik/learn_buch.pdf

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