Chapter XI

Promoting Lifelong Learning Online: A Case Study of a Professional Development Experience

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Abstract

The introduction of computers and emerging technology applications has changed the learning landscape, especially in higher education. From traditional university classroom learning to community-based adult continuing education programs, it is common to see the delivery of instruction that is now supported by online or distance learning technologies. Online learning has become a common strategy to deliver instruction, enhance access to educational resources, and achieve success in higher education. This chapter focuses on practical applications of emerging technologies in the delivery of professional development programs.
Introduction

The introduction of computers and emerging technology applications has changed the learning landscape, especially in higher education. From traditional university classroom learning to community-based adult continuing education programs, it is common to see the delivery of instruction now supported by online or distance learning technologies (Huang, 2002). Online learning has become a common strategy to deliver instruction, enhance access to educational resources, and achieve success in higher education (Glacken & Baylen, 2001).

This chapter focuses on practical applications of emerging technologies (e.g., Internet, asynchronous communication tools, and course management systems) in the delivery of professional development programs. The goal of this chapter is to identify, discuss, and illustrate to individuals with professional interest in lifelong learning strategies how online technologies, such as a course management system called Authenticated Networked Guided Environment for Learning (ANGEL) can support the course design, implementation, and evaluation at a distance.

Overview

What is the essential link between “lifelong learning” and “online distance education”? First, after reviewing how other researchers like Aspin and Chapman (2000), Field (2001), and Griffin (1999) define lifelong learning, Koper and Tattersall (2004) state it "refers to the activities people perform throughout their life to improve their knowledge, skills and competence in a particular field, given some personal, societal or employment related motives" (p. 689). The successful implementation of lifelong learning activities could be hindered by mental, financial, access, learning design, and information (Longworth, 2003). It is important for those involved in designing and implementing these activities to have a thorough understanding first of their impact or influences.

Koper and Tattersall (2004) argue that barriers involving access, learning design, and information could be resolved with the use of existing and emerging technologies. Networked learning technologies could support lifelong learning activities “anytime, anyplace, and anywhere” (p. 698) as well as traditional learning contexts (Baylen & Zhu, 2005; Koper & Tattersall, 2004). Also, Edwards (1993) states that the use of electronic tools makes learning a private and personal experience that appears to motivate learners.

Examples from the literature of networked technologies supporting lifelong learning include the Semantic Web, interactive communication technologies, and e-portfolios (Friesen & Anderson, 2004; Zhu & Baylen, 2005). These technologies seem to fit