Chapter 8
The Impact of Interactive and Collaborative Learning Activities on the Personalised Learning of Adult Distance Learners

Richard Hall
De Montfort University, UK

Steve Mackenzie
De Montfort University, UK

Melanie Hall
Staffordshire University, UK

ABSTRACT
The adoption across higher education of participatory, collaborative and connective ‘read/write web’ tools and synchronous classrooms has the potential to extend learner engagement and motivation. Embedding these user-centred tools within curriculum practices offers the possibility for a sixth-generation iteration of distance learning that frames a learner-focused pedagogy. This pedagogy is underpinned by problem-based activities that pivot around a cycle of needing/wanting, doing, digesting and feedback. They are supported by a facilitating tutor taking a connectivist approach to stimulate learning. This chapter highlights both the drivers for this sixth-generation iteration and the subsequent development of a model know as SCORE 2.0, or Synchronous Community Orientated Reflective and Experiential 2.0. The impact of this model on two cohorts of adult distance learners is discussed, in order to evaluate opportunities for future pedagogical development.

INTRODUCTION
Distance learning opportunities for adults, in the form of postgraduate, masters or continuing professional development courses, have been given extra impetus through employer engagement and work-based learning courses in UK higher education (Confederation of British Industry, 2008; Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), 2008). The HEFCE Employer Engagement Strategy...
The Impact of Interactive and Collaborative Learning Activities

(2006) has a key objective to “promote flexible, responsive provision, in particular testing the development of the workplace as a site of learning”. This move towards flexible delivery in multiple locations supports a more personalised educational experience. Through the integration of connectivist pedagogies and new web-based and mobile technologies, these courses carry with them opportunities for innovative, connectivist practices to emerge (National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE), 2008; Siemens, 2008).

The wider adoption of participatory, collaborative and connective ‘Web 2.0’ or ‘read/write web’ tools has the potential to change pedagogic dynamics (O’Reilly, 2005; Siemens, 2008). This is especially the case where technologies are fused with an evolving understanding of the different ways in which adults learn. Hence, the acknowledgement that social and active learning has an important influence on the affective and cognitive development of learners is important (Bandura, 1989; Bloom, Krathwohl & Masia, 1964; Franklin & van Harmelen, 2007; Gangadharbatla, 2008). This andragogic approach aligns with recent studies on the student experience in higher education (Conole et al., 2006; Trinder et al., 2008), which suggest that a collection of technologies, including both institutional and non-institutional tools, are crucial in connecting students’ informal and formal learning.

In order to model these flexible, learner-focused opportunities in the context of adult, distance learning this chapter focuses upon the development of a sixth generation, integrated model of distance learning that combines online synchronous classes and read/write web tasks, supported by an online, community-orientated learning network. The pedagogic strategy is guided by Garrison and Anderson’s (2003) ‘community of inquiry’ model, which emphasises the importance of social, teaching and cognitive presence, with the aim of enhancing the engagement, motivation and satisfaction of adult distance learners.

This sixth-generation model is entitled SCORE2.0 or Synchronous Community-Oriented Reflective and Experiential (Web) 2.0. The model is evaluated through the implementation of integrated tasks with Post-Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (PG Cert HE) participants, academics engaging in informal professional development, and adult learners on a Youth and Community course. As a result strategies are identified for enhancing curriculum design and delivery to support adult distance learning, based upon the model.

BACKGROUND

Adult-Learning, Andragogy and Informal Education

Non-traditional, adult students engaged in learning, generally within further or higher education, have been noted as persons aged 25 and over (Whisnant, Sullivan, & Slayton, 1992). For Knowles (1980, p.46), adulthood is realised at ‘the point at which individuals perceive themselves to be essentially self-directing’. Gibbons and Wentworth (2001) argued that non-traditional students learn more from the andragogical, self-directed learning noted by Knowles (1975), than through a traditional, instructional pedagogic approach.

For Knowles (1992), non-traditional, adult learners working online become increasingly autonomous and self-motivated within reflective, problem-based learning contexts. As a result, Gibbons and Wentworth (2001) suggest that online instructor training should be based on andragogical theory, in order to accommodate the nature of the online adult learner. However, critics argue that andragogy is not a descriptive model of how adults learn, rather it is a prescriptive model of how adult learners should learn effectively (Tusting & Barton 2006). Schapiro (2003) takes this issue further:

Recommend this product to your librarian:
www.igi-global.com/e-resources/library-recommendation/?id=1

Related Content

Into the Great Wide Open: Responsive Learning Environments for Personalised Learning
www.igi-global.com/chapter/into-great-wide-open/63210?camid=4v1a

Incorporating “World View” into the LMS or CMS is Best
www.igi-global.com/chapter/incorporating-world-view-into-lms/63188?camid=4v1a

Personal Learning Environments: Concept or Technology?
www.igi-global.com/article/personal-learning-environments/60124?camid=4v1a

Improving the Impact and Return of Investment of Game-Based Learning
www.igi-global.com/article/improving-impact-return-investment-game/76370?camid=4v1a