Chapter VIII

The Real Challenge of Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning: How Do We Motivate ALL Stakeholders?

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Abstract

This chapter starts from the premise that, to be effective, computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL) has to be intrinsically motivating. However, in contrast to much of the literature in the field, which focuses almost exclusively on the needs of students, this chapter discusses three groups of stakeholders whose concerns and motivation have to be considered: students, instructors, and institutions. Following a critical review of the literature on online education in general, which highlights some of the major themes that have attracted research so far, the chapter proceeds to introduce a paradigm that integrates the needs of the above three groups of stakeholders. The model is followed by a description of the Radical Model, an innovative approach to computer-supported collaborative learning that is an example of applying the proposed paradigm in practice. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the research implications from the model.
Introduction

In a recent editorial (Emurian, 2001), the author hails online education as a revolution that would make the dream of “management of individual differences among learners” come true (pp. 3-5). In his editorial, Emurian lists a number of rhetorical questions that relate to the issues that he believes will be addressed by the advent of online education, including:

1. Where is it written that the pace of life must be controlled by an academic institution?
2. Where is it written that a course grade must be frozen in time forever?
3. Where is it written that a student must be limited to a single evaluation occasion, without the opportunity for additional learning to achieve an intellectual criterion of excellence?
4. Where is it written that the scale of an intellectual unit must be a traditional semester-long course?

The above questions reflect a series of issues that are of importance to students and that online education could address. Once these issues are addressed through the design of courses that can be started and finished at any time and assessment procedures that allow students to repeat tasks indefinitely, the end result could, indeed, be a highly individualized learning experience for students. But is this what online education is about, particularly in the context of universities?

The underlying premise of this chapter is that this is not the case. In order for online education to succeed, it has to cater to all of the stakeholders. Creating an environment that is motivating to students is one of the major objectives of any educational technology. However, for such a technology to be sustained over time, it has to be intrinsically motivating not only to the learners (students), but also to those who manage the teaching resources (instructors), and those who administer and resource them (institutions). This chapter introduces a paradigm that integrates the needs of students, instructors, and institutions. The paradigm is followed by a case study that details the Radical Model, an innovative approach to computer-supported collaborative learning that is an example of applying the paradigm in practice. The discussion section of this chapter concludes with an outline of the research implications from the model.

Background

The literature on online education to date seems to emphasize a number of themes. Following is a necessarily short review of those themes:

First, there seems to be a debate over the TYPES of approaches to online teaching. One of the central models in this area, the Typology of Dispersion (Johansen, 1992), differentiates between online teaching that occurs at the same place and at the same time...
Fostering a Technology Cultural Change: The Changing Paradigms at the University of Minnesota Crookston
www.igi-global.com/chapter/fostering-technology-cultural-change/6357?camid=4v1a