55 Minute Workshop

Authentic online community of learning workshop

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With the rapid growth of online enrolments (Allen & Seaman, 2011; Brown & Hughes, 2014), many universities are seeking ways to encourage educators to embrace research-based methods for effective online teaching (Crawford-Ferre & Wiest, 2012). Learning management systems are widely used by universities around the world; however, many teachers are still uncertain about how to design interactive and engaging online learning environments (Parker, 2015). Research suggests advances in technology have increased the potential for using real-life tasks as a basis for learning in web-based environments, as high-end technology skills are no longer needed to create truly engaging online activities. Traditionally, educators have primarily used real life examples as vehicles for practice of skills or processes. However, a more innovative approach is to build a whole course of study around real life tasks.

In this workshop, participants will be introduced to the theory and research that underpins the authentic online community of learning (AoCoL) model (Parker, 2015). The model and guiding principles were developed as a result of a doctoral study that investigated how to construct more interactive, engaging and student-centred online learning environments which promote key learning skills and encourage self-directed learning. The key principles encompassed in the AoCoL model include: 21st century learning skills, authentic learning elements, community of inquiry components—social, cognitive and teaching presence, meaningful learning with technology and open educational resources. The research findings suggested that the AoCoL framework was a successful alternative to models frequently used to develop online courses and provided learners with greater flexibility and control over their learning. Participants (higher education practitioners) themselves believed that the online course influenced their choice of strategy when designing their future online courses.

This workshop is designed for higher education practitioners involved in designing and delivering online courses. Participants will work in pairs or small groups and are invited to bring along a copy of their unit outline. Participants in this workshop will:

1. view examples of authentic learning approaches implemented in the higher education sector
2. analyse their unit outlines using the authentic online community of learning model to identify opportunities for incorporating meaningful real-life tasks in their teaching area
3. discuss pedagogical and technological strategies for designing authentic online units.
Visit the eLearnOpen research website for further information about the AoCoL model and to access the workshop resources:

- Workshop page: http://elearnopen.info/index.php/workshops/

Further information about the underpinning principles encompassed in the AoCoL model is available on the following websites:

- Authentic learning (Herrington): http://authenticlearning.info/AuthenticLearning/Home.html
- Community of inquiry model (Garrison, Cleveland-Innes & Vaughan): https://coi.athabascau.ca/
- Open education resources (Smartcopying.edu.au): http://www.smartcopying.edu.au/open-education/open-education-resources

**References**


