Online Communication and Information Technology Education

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Abstract

Communication is one of the fundamental elements required for facilitating learning. It is present in the work of (Vygotsky 1978) and more recently (Wenger 1998). These authors are concerned with understanding learning and explaining it. Others have focused their attention on the development of frameworks to facilitate learning. In particular, work related to the introduction of information technology (IT) into the learning domain (e-learning) is exemplified by (Laurillard 1993) and (Salmon 2000).

This paper looks at online communication as the link between established theory of learning and literature on e-learning. This work is related to action research data that was collected by the authors on a course using the blended learning mode of delivery. The results suggest that communication is both a challenge and an enabler for facilitating a successful blended learning course.

Keywords: Communication, Blended Learning, Communities of Practice, E-Learning

Biographies

Aleksej Heinze is a lecturer in the Information Systems Institute, University of Salford. For several years he worked with an entrepreneurial software company that wished to enter the case management systems market for firms of solicitors.

His current research interests are concerned with the practice of Blended Learning in higher education and the general application of information technology for educational purposes: www.aheinze.me.uk. He is a member of the British Computer Society and the Higher Education Academy.

Chris Procter is a senior lecturer in the Information Systems Institute, University of Salford. His main teaching is in Project Management. He co-ordinates the work of Graduate Teaching Assistants in the ISI and is the Industrial Placement co-ordinator. He is also second year tutor for full time undergraduates. His research is primarily into teaching and learning and especially blended learning and he is a member of the Higher Education Research Centre.

He is responsible for a number of funded projects including a major European Social Fund project to provide 'Flexible IT' to people from the North West. He is a member of the British Computer Society and the Higher Education Academy. He has worked at Salford since 1991 with a one year gap in 1999-2000 based at the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand.

His main area of research interest and activity is in the area of Teaching and Learning. He has taken part in numerous workshops, seminars and conferences concerning this area over the last few years.