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Plenary Sessions

Sustainable Open Education Resources – The Connexions Model

Dr Richard Baraniuk, Rice University, USA

Connexions is a non-profit publishing project that brings textbooks and other learning materials into the Internet Age. Connexions makes high-quality educational content available to anyone, anywhere, anytime for free on the web and at very low cost in print. Established in 1999, Connexions is based on a set of intuitions shared by a remarkably wide range of academics: that knowledge should be free and open to use and re-use; that collaboration should be easier, not harder; that people should get credit and kudos for contributing to research and education; and that ideas are linked in unusual and surprising ways.

Connexions welcomes authors, teachers, and learners to “create, rip, mix, and burn” textbooks, courses, and learning materials from a globally accessible, open-access repository. In Connexions, anyone can create “modules” of information – smallish, Lego™ block documents that communicate a concept, a procedure, a set of questions. Connect some modules together, and you have a web course or textbook, or build a curriculum entirely of your choosing. All content is open-licensed under the Creative Commons attribution license; all tools are free and open-source.

Connexions is designed to overcome some of the serious problems associated with the traditional method of transmitting educational information – publishing. First, Connexions strives to bring people back into the educational equation, in particular those people who have been “shut out” of the publishing world, like K-12 teachers, scientists and engineers out in industry, and people who do not read and write English. Now these individuals are able to participate not solely as consumers of educational content, but as active contributors to a shared global repository of knowledge. Second, Connexions reduces the time lag between producing a textbook and getting it into the hands of students. This is particularly important in fast-moving areas of science, technology, and medicine. Moreover, it allows instructors to rapidly customize and remediate textbooks, course by course, or even week by week. Third, Connexions brings down the extremely high cost of teaching materials, with no compromise in the quality of the presentation or print. Thanks to a collaboration with on-demand press QOOP, Inc., a new 600-page, hard-bound textbook sells for just \$31 through Connexions. Connexions enables even less expensive options: users can print materials themselves or use them on-line at no charge. This ability will allow us to disintermediate the academic publishing industry – providing authors direct access to students.

Today, Connexions is one of the most-used open-education resources on the web, employed in traditional college and K-12 settings, in distance learning, and by lifelong learners around the globe. Demand is surging; currently the Connexions servers handle over 25 million hits per month representing over 850,000 visitors from over 200 countries. Volunteers are translating modules and courses into a variety of different languages, including Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Thai; many of these are our most popular.

Connexions content development is grass-roots organized and inter-institutional. Our most active content development areas at present include music, engineering, physics, chemistry, bioinformatics, nanotechnology, and history. For example, a vibrant community of electrical engineering faculty from Stanford, UC Berkeley, University of Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio

Meeting the Learning Needs of Generation Y

The Learning Content Needs of Generation Y – Present and Future with Case Studies

Fadi Abdul Khalek, UKS, United Arab Emirates

Since the baby boomers, the Y-generation is probably the single largest generation prevailing both in the academic as well as the current and future workplace markets.

Arguably, unlike the baby boomers, the Y-Generation is the first global generation stretching beyond national borders. With modern communication and collaboration technologies, the entire world is the playground of such generation.

Generational divide, as opposed to gender and racial divides, has grown to be one of the more serious divides separating the tutor and the learner, the manager and the employee, the senior and the junior. Bridging such a generational gap has become a stern pre-requisite to achieving both academic as well as professional objectives for both the institution as well as for the individual.

The above, among various other reasons, has caused the Y-Generation to be the focus of several studies whether in the workplace or in the classroom. Understanding the Y-generation has grown to become the single most important step towards being able to tailor effective learning solutions.

Who are they, how do they behave, how do they achieve and how can we get to them? Are all questions that our work was designed to attempt to shed some lights on through research outcomes, actual implementations and through optimal use of technology to address the needs and demands of the Y-Generation.

Our work covers the following three areas pertaining to Y-Generation with particular focus on the learning content needs in order to achieve objectives.

The first area examines, in some detail, the common characteristics of the Y-Generation. In doing so, one of the important approaches is to define the Y-generation constituency: Is it purely based on age and age groups, or is it a combination of common values regardless of age? If it is the latter, the hypothesis our work adopts, then what are these characteristics, how can they be detected and identified and how can they be projected on the entire learning experience.

The second area covers the different use of technologies and tools that are designed for and used by the Y-generation. Adopting and adequately utilizing such set of tools is the key to developing learning content that manages to engage and develop the Y-generation learners both on the workplace and in the classroom.

The arrival of the social Internet, Web 2.0, has resulted in a shift from instruction delivered by experts to collaboration, participation, sharing, and learner-centered experiences. The same networking and collaborative learning environments have also emerged for mobile devices, which is still the most preferred play (And study) ground for the Millennials.

Learning on a Global Scale

Learning Design of Courses Utilising ICT for Promoting Intercultural Dialogue

Dr Kumiko Aoki, National Institute of Multimedia Education, Japan & Molnar Pal, Karoli Gaspar University, Hungary

In a global society, it is becoming increasingly important for individuals to be culturally aware of similarities and differences of others in different countries, different regions, and different backgrounds, not in terms of forming cultural stereotypes, but in terms of developing a capacity to see the world in another's eyes. With the availability of free or inexpensive communication tools on the Internet, now that it is possible to design a course which involves working with learners in different countries and different cultures for the explicit purpose of learning from the interactions with those people in different countries. In designing such intercultural learning experiences through international class-to-class partnerships, one must think of the following four factors: (1) selecting appropriate technological tools and resources to use; (2) coming up with a series of learning activities and tasks that are to be done locally, with the partner class, individually as well as collaboratively to facilitate intercultural dialogue and learning; (3) developing methods to assess students' learning aligned with the goals of the course; and (4) putting all the logistics in place to plan and run the course smoothly with partner classes.

Case Study 1: Turkey-Japan Project

A telecollaborative class project was started in April 2006, connecting Online Communication class at Anadolu University in Turkey and Media Communication class at Kanda University of International Studies in Japan. The idea of the project emerged when the first author visited Anadolu University and met a professor at Anadolu University in February 2006. The aim of the project was to provide students with opportunities to collaborate internationally using necessary technological tools. The project lasted four semesters with each semester having different groups of students.

Technological tools can be classified into ten categories according to their main type of use; manipulation, presentation, analysis, searching, managing, communicating, visualizing, supporting, evaluating and adaptation (Conole, Littlejohn, Falconer & Jeffery, 2005). In this project, tools for manipulation, presentation, searching, and communicating were used. Some of the usages of those tools are to be described below.

When it first started, we specifically thought of utilizing videoconferencing facilities at both end (though the videoconferencing facility was not available at Kanda University of International Studies, it could utilize the videoconferencing facility nearby where the first author works). They were room-based videoconferencing facilities conforming to the H.232 standard. The videoconferencing session was scheduled at the beginning of the project to introduce the students at one end to those at the other. In addition, another videoconferencing session was conducted at the end of the project to have group presentations. Though having synchronous activities such as videoconferencing is always a great motivator for students to engage in telecollaborative activities, it tends to be a logistical nightmare. The time difference between Turkey and Japan in addition to different class schedules makes it very difficult to arrange synchronous activities. In addition to room-based videoconferencing sessions at the beginning and the end of the project cycle, textual chats such as MSN messenger were used often among students to communicate synchronously.

Facing Difference: Innovative Diversity E-Learning in the Finnish Customer Service Sector

Dr Alan Bruce, Universal Learning Systems, Ireland

1. Background

Modern society is going through unprecedented levels of change. These changes are seen at all levels and contexts. The rate of immigration into the EU has strongly increased during the last 20 years. Free movement of labour means that greater numbers of Europeans can move between different countries when they wish to find new jobs or a better standard of living. This massive movement of peoples within the EU means that contact with new and different cultures is happening at an increasing pace.

All European countries have seen change or are in the middle of it. This change produces many benefits as well as creating challenges and difficulties. Differing customs and habits may cause confusion. Conflict may arise from misunderstanding. Uncertainty is increasing in a new and competitive environment. Unfamiliarity can produce stress and miscommunication for both host and immigrant communities.

The nature and scale of this change has a direct impact on equality related employment issues. This is not merely to state that there are new challenges and issues. There are. But old challenges and issues have re-asserted themselves in new and sometimes menacing ways.

This change encompasses:

- Global systems and demographics
- National frameworks and policies
- Socio-political structures
- Economic structures
- Best employment practice.

Equality may not be an easy concept. But it is rooted in our understanding of what it means to be human – both in terms of the individual and in terms of the group or society from which that individual originates. It has to do with the right to be treated with fairness, respect and understanding regardless of secondary characteristics (like gender, nationality, age or disability). It has to do with opportunity.

2. Managing diversity: the practice

The business case for diversity touches on the immediate socio-economic parameters of a rapidly evolving world where ethnic, cultural, religious and cultural differences will increasingly become a permanent feature of the fabric of all European societies.

Managing Diversity is today a key issue in management and personnel practice. It emerges from profound labour market changes in the Western world over the past forty years. Managing diversity can be seen as a tool to enable employers to adapt to challenges posed by differentiated workforces where expectations and levels of communication may be sources of potential conflict. In a wider context, managing diversity may be seen as a mechanism to benefit from the change processes and to tap into levels of creativity and potential produced by radical departures from past certainties.

Diversity is most effectively understood when positively linked with:

Sharing Real World Experiences

Web-Based Courses for Capacity Strengthening in the Agricultural Sector in Developing Countries

Jan Beniest & Tom Vandenbosch, World Agroforestry Centre, Kenya, Thomas Zschocke, UNU-EHS, Germany & Aissetou Dramé-Yayé, ANAFE, Kenya

Introduction

Reaching a large and diverse community of practitioners in developing countries to strengthen their capacities in agricultural research and development is a challenge for the CGIAR¹. One of its priorities is to build and strengthen capacity of its partners in developing countries in the agricultural and natural resources management sectors. Important audiences and partnerships for this are African universities and other learning institutions. Many are nowadays organized in networks such as the African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education (ANAFE). By strengthening these capacities, it is expected that there will be a broader impact on various others active in these agriculture related sectors.

Since 2001 the CGIAR Centres have explored eLearning to meet the learning demands of these audiences. Activities undertaken include, among others, the development of agricultural learning objects repositories, knowledge banks on agricultural crops, support to university curriculum development and offering eLearning opportunities. This paper describes two on-line learning events conducted by the CGIAR and suggests future directions for agricultural eLearning in developing countries of the tropics.

The learner/partners perspectives

Created in 1993, ANAFE is a network of tertiary agricultural education institutions. The aim was to incorporate agroforestry into relevant and high quality curricula, strengthen the capacity of lecturers to deliver courses on the subject, collaboratively develop learning resources and assisting students to conduct related field research. ANAFE membership expanded from 29 to 128 institutions in 34 African countries. Its mandate evolved to include all land use and natural resources management disciplines. An assessment conducted by Chakeredza et al. (2008) among these highlighted the need for improved teaching and learning modes involving the use of ICT as well as an increasing demand for on-line learning activities and resources. In July-August 2008, ANAFE organized its second symposium on teaching climate change during which a paper on eLearning opportunities was presented (Beniest et al. 2008). As a result, several other African universities expressed their interest in getting involved and proposed the development of a collaborative eLearning project.

Several efforts conducted by international, regional and national organizations aim at promoting the use of ICT for learning in developing countries, but in terms of high quality content delivery for agriculture and natural resources management, the CGIAR Centres have a unique comparative advantage as a result of their research for development activities. Effective coordination and collaboration between all concerned present great opportunities to strengthen teaching and learning of these subjects in developing countries in Africa.

1 Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research

Talkademy – The Future Way of Customised Learning

Klaus Hammermüller, Verein Offenes Lernen, Austria

The 3D Internet (3Di), as a medium for education, is increasingly becoming a popular idea. 3Di promises to resolve one of the major challenges of E-learning, which is that it is dependent much more on the disciplinary or self-motivational capabilities of the individual. Using 3Di works out many of the constraints associated with teaching „in the flesh“ - mainly those limitations of the physical world that bind education to a specific locality.

How can the potential of 3Di best be utilized? What are the experiences from „actual“ learning scenarios?

Talkademy.org is a „green field“ organization which explores not only the use of 3Di in education, but also in the social context. The hypothesis is simply that using a given tool, without adapting to the processes of education, can not best utilize the new potential of that tool. During the past year, Talkademy has conducted a series of different language learning scenarios ranging from individual 1-on-1 conversation to graded university courses with up to 50 participants. The observations taken from these learning experiences lead to such questions as, „Is an on-site teacher truly necessary?“. More specifically, „Does such a teacher have the proper assigned role, or could a better role-model be implemented?“.

Introduction

Talkademy.org is a developmental implementation of a „learner-centric“ style of organization.

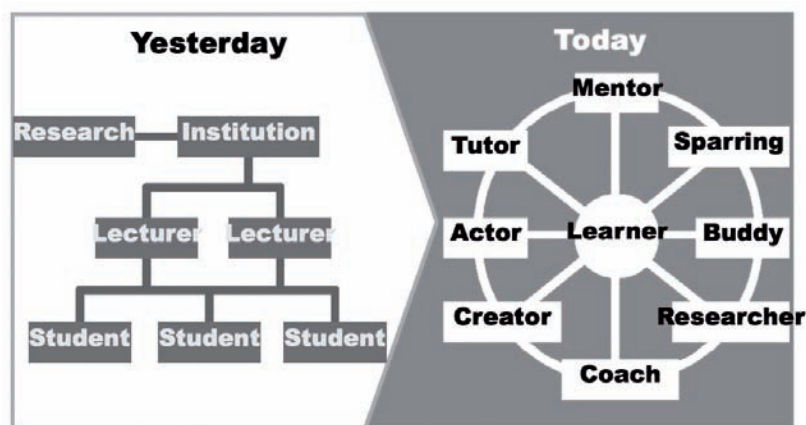


Illustration 1: organizational model

We are in line with some other such Web 2.0 learning organizations which attempt to avoid the classic role-models of „teachers versus students“. Rather, our purpose is to build a community of participants who may choose to fulfill different roles by their participation.

Ideally, a curriculum would be formed by the individual demands of the students since today's dynamic business and social environment requires more flexibility than previous educational organizations could have offered

Serious Games

A Board Game Reinvented, an Online Game on Metabolism of Cells as an OER

Jeroen Berkhout, Centre for Learning Sciences and Technologies, (CELSTEC), Open University of the Netherlands, The Netherlands

Introduction of the Game

The Metabola Game is a playful tool to help Students understanding the close interrelations between the many synthesis and breakdown reactions in a cell. It was in the 80th originally designed as a Paper Board Game by Thijs Lopes-Cardozo, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Dept. of Biochemistry & Cell Biology and Associate Professor at the Utrecht University .

In 1985 the game was introduced at the Open Universiteit Nederland by Prof. Dr. Rietje van Dam-Mieras.

Unfortunately the Game was not successful in Distance Education.



Strength of the reinvented Game

The Metabola game is best played with two teams, but you can also practice on your own, which makes this Web based Game much more powerful. Playing with the original Board Game required a big time investment of a tutor.

If you as a player want to try out something, while waiting for your next turn, you can start your own game on a different game board in a second web browser.

You can also play with the pieces of one of the other members of your team (peersupport). Obviously you can play it from any location.

Future Tools and Technologies

SPACE NOTATION – Cinematic Space as an Instrument for Understanding the Human-Space Relationship – Studio Lab

Heidi Arad, Shulamit Sonnino & Sharon Karlinsky, Colman College, Israel

Abstract

The cinematic space is an illusion composed of fragmented, virtual elements. Through the use of a sequenced montage of frames a complete and continuous perception of ‚place‘ is created.

The studio’s aim was to create a new relationship between man-user-space through the introduction of an additional participant: the camera.

This paper includes a detailed demonstration of the design process from lines of a script through deconstruction and interpretation to visual influences and finally to a variety of finished ‚products‘ – student’s materializations of the same script. This will serve as a clear illustration of the design process and its creative potential.

1. BACKGROUND

Our perception of space is linked to the way we move through it.

By creating a studio lab class for interior design students that relates to space through the camera lens we hope to educate future designers, giving them the tools and outlook to plan spaces that have a direct relationship with the users.

This course was given to a group of 2nd and 3rd year students in collaboration with movie producer Shulamit Sonnino.

2. THEMATIC GOALS

„The cinema satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking, but it also goes further, developing scopophilia in its narcissistic aspect. The conventions of mainstream film focus attention on the human form. Scale, space, stories are all anthropomorphic. Here, curiosity and the wish to look intermingle with a fascination with likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between the human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world.“[1]

The representation of the space through the cinematographic frame changes the famous Corbusian concept of the Architectural Promenade. The linear, continuous perception of space becomes a partial description that we complete in our minds.

The use of a film script as a design trigger forced the students to deal with the physical requirements of space and its psychological and symbolical meanings simultaneously.

3. THE COURSE

The studio was divided in two parts: