Chapter VI

An Emerging Model of Community Collaboration During the Construction of E-Learning Resources:
Implications for Papua New Guinea

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Abstract

For many lecturers within the academic community, the increasing emphasis on the use of ICT for research and teaching can be threatening, but these fears can be eased if professional development is supportive and ongoing, and provided in flexible, appropriate and adaptable ways. This is particularly relevant in institutions in developing countries where

the increasing availability of e-learning technologies poses a challenge to ICT experts and trainers in assisting and supporting lecturers in adapting to the use of these technologies in the teaching/learning environment. This chapter focuses on the results of two case studies and describes the roles that the two instructional designers (IDs) played in facilitating the professional development of lecturers that were constructing e-learning environments. The findings suggest that the lecturers needed ongoing support, advice and technical assistance for an extended period of time. This study has enabled the researchers to develop a team collaboration model for planning and designing e-learning resources that would be piloted in tertiary institutions in Papua New Guinea. The findings also contribute to the research literature about the design processes needed to improve the quality of learning resources.

Introduction

The Papua New Guinea (PNG) government plans to develop a network system for education and research aimed at linking the five universities and other tertiary institutions. In addition to this development, AusAid has funded information and communication technology (ICT) and multimedia centres in five teacher colleges (AusAID is the Australian Government agency responsible for managing Australia's overseas aid program). It is claimed that the long-term sustainability of these centres depends on the ability of selected lecturers to become technical assistants and instructional designers (IDs) to provide basic ICT support to both academics and non-academics within these institutions. AusAid recognises the important role that IDs play and has commenced training programs that instruct selected lecturers to effectively use ICT for teaching and learning purposes. However, the availability of new technologies at these institutions, such as Pacific Adventist University (PAU), poses a challenge for these newly trained "experts," as they are still developing their own expertise as they support other lecturers to develop suitable online courses for their students. Traditionally IDs focus on the effective design of instruction in order to meet the agreed learning outcomes, but they achieve this within a human context. Therefore, effective IDs have to be capable of effectively harnessing the human potential at their disposal. This relies on their ability to form viable communities of practice (Wenger, 2002). In the context of PAU the ID is a work colleague who is developing their ID expertise. This person has to develop his/her credibility as an ID and to develop a viable community of practice among colleagues who are novices in the use of ICT to support learning.

This chapter describes how two IDs worked with lecturers (who were novices in the use of ICT for instruction) to prepare e-learning resources. It describes the issues facing the implementation of the technology and the implications for continued development and use of computer-based technologies within PNG. The chapter concludes with the presentation of a training model that emerged from this study, and discusses how this model could be applied in the PNG context.

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