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Chapter XIII

Teaching and Learning with Videoconference and Video Chat

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Introduction

In the last chapter, videoconference and video chat were defined as technologies that allow two-way video and audio communications between remote parties. Definitions of the technologies were provided and they were differentiated. Video chat was computer-based while videoconference was appliance-based. Functionally and for teaching and learning the technologies are very similar. The single greatest logistical difference is generally the number of participants possible at each location.

Background

While much has been written on the technical details of videoconferences, only a limited amount has been written on the use of this technology for teaching and

learning. However, the literature concurs on a correlation between interaction and the success of videoconference and by extension video chat. The literature concurs that for effective teaching and learning interaction is paramount.

Latchem (in Mitchell, 1993) suggests that videoconferences work best with small- to medium-sized groups of students at each site who are encouraged to interact with each other as well as trainers, tutors, or teachers. He further suggests that video-conferences are excellent in the support of learning activities such as simulations, role plays, case studies, brainstorming, problem solving, and in general cognition building. Daunt (1997) reinforces the importance of interaction in videoconferences and describes facilitators of videoconferences in learning as "teleteachers."

Most teleteachers agree that interaction is an important element in their teaching - after all it is the only thing that distinguishes teleteaching from a video tape! Interactivity takes many forms; it is not just limited to audio and video, or just teacher-student interactions. It represents the connectivity students feel with the teacher, the local tutors and their peers. (p. 109)

Laurillard (1993) describes videoconferences as a discursive media and suggests that they are not suited to the transmission of presentations or lectures. She continues to argue that video would be more appropriate for this. Kobayashi, Tanaka, Yamaji, and Otsuka (1997) reflect on their experience with videoconferences in higher educa-tion and argue that the least effective forms of discourse for this technology were those characterized by presentations—monologues where the sole purpose was the one-way transfer of information. The author's experience with videoconference in learning is congruent with the view that they are suited to interaction rather than presentation. Many times he has been faced with teachers who ask why the students go to sleep in their videoconferences. The answer is usually that one-way lectures are not suitable for videoconferences. Videoconferences rely on interaction to be effective and there are a range of technologies that are more suited to the encapsula-tion and delivery of one-way materials.

The author's experience with videoconference in learning is congruent with the view that they are suited to interaction rather than presentation. One-way presentations such as lectures are not appropriate for videoconferences and it is probably cheaper, as well as more educationally effective, to use a one-way technology for these kinds of teaching and learning activities such as text, audio, or video recordings.

Videoconference and the Learning Technologies Model

The literature concurs that videoconference is best used as an interactive technol-ogy in learning. Hence in the learning technologies model (LTM), as described in

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