Chapter 8

Networked Learning and Teaching for International Work Integrated Learning

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the use of information communications technology (ICT) to support international work integrated learning to provide more understanding of Web-mediated communities. The findings of a study of ICT use by students enrolled in a student mobility course on campuses in Australia and Vietnam reveal that students used a range of university provided commercial software as well as freely available ICT services and tools, particularly social networking sites, during their studies. A major challenge for universities is to provide access to the latest technologies at a cost that is affordable to the institution and its students, which provides the necessary level of reliability, availability, accessibility, functionality, and security. An online central management system or base camp can assist students to navigate the complex technical, social, cultural, and knowledge building opportunities that work integrated learning abroad offers.

INTRODUCTION

Universities today are reliant upon efficient and effective information communications technology (ICT) systems as education and administration tools. Most modern universities these days have an ICT platform that is available for students to communicate with each other and staff members, as well as providing access to the learning materials and instructional resources. Generally speaking, ICT does not determine the educational experience, however ICT tools do provide opportunities to explore the interplay of technical, discursive social and cultural factors when developing new

curricula (Facer & Stanford, 2010). Increasingly, online learning environments are being used in higher education due to demands from students for courses that are delivered flexibly (Harris, 2009). ICT driven educational systems can be costly to implement and are eventually superseded due to the constant evolution of technology that spawns newer and more effective applications. A major challenge for universities is therefore to provide access to the latest technologies at a cost that is affordable to the institution itself and its' students. This chapter considers internationalisation of the curriculum, through student mobility and work integrated learning (WIL), and the use of ICT tools and services to support and enhance the student learning experience. A case study explores the use of ICT during a WIL course delivered at dual campuses in Melbourne, Australia and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

INTERNATIONALISING THE CURRICULUM

Internationalising the curriculum is an important and strategic initiative of universities today. An internationalised curriculum has the potential to enrich the educational experiences of local and international students by providing a range of opportunities for study and cultural exchange. Caruana and Hanstock (2003) identify student mobility as a main international activity. Student mobility is supported in university-led study tours, student exchange and field education overseas.

The cognitive approach to teaching and learning is often used with student mobility issues, and was the approach used in the WIL projects discussed in this chapter. This approach to education was developed in the latter half of the 20th Century with an emphasis on the active processes learners use to solve problems and construct new knowledge. It is also known as problem based learning. The two main instructional architectures that are used with the cognitive approach are the 'guided discovery' and the 'exploratory' (McKay,

2008). The guided discovery architecture uses real world problems or scenarios to drive the learning process. Students typically access various sources of data to resolve problems with instructional support available to help them. While the exploratory architecture offers high levels of learner control. The instruction is designed to provide a rich set of learning resources that include: learning content; examples; demonstrations; and knowledge/skills building exercises; complete with the means to navigate these materials. Educational instructional architectures of this type are frequently used for online courseware (Anderson, 2008).

Different approaches to teaching and learning create considerable challenges for mobility students with them often left to adapt to the new learning environment as part of the experience of studying in a different culture (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). Hofstede (1986) however contends however that, '"'the burden of adaptation should be primarily on the teachers" and not the students (p. 301). Part of this adaptation includes the teacher taking responsibility for informing students of the approach taken to teaching and learning and how best to learn in this new environment. This involves recognition by the teacher of different levels and types of intellectual and social engagement, required by the student to participate effectively. Opportunities need to be provided to support and develop participation in a range of activities including listening, reading, speaking and writing (Northedge, 2003).

An internationalised curriculum requires assessment tasks and strategies that are "socially and culturally responsive" (MacKinnon & Manathunga 2003, p.133). Work produced by mobility students will reflect the level of course engagement and this needs to be reflected in assessment. Northedge (2003) stresses the importance of "teachers tolerating variant understandings provided there are clear signs of constructive engagement with the specialist discourse" (p. 5). Group work has been found to be effective for encouraging participation and the sharing of ideas and experiences between local and mobil-

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