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Innovation in Teaching and Learning New approaches to Professionalism

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Abstract

This presentation will be valuable to members of professional communities of practice who want to extend their reach to those who cannot attend face to face meetings but who wish to be involved in collaborative knowledge creation activities. The presenters from the MirandaNet Fellowship will share the ways in which they use low cost Web 2 tools to develop and store new knowledge as well as repurposing the evidence to influence policy makers.

Keywords

collaboration, Web 2, professionalism, community of practice, policy

INTRODUCTION

This presentation will focus on what is currently known about processes of informal collaborative knowledge building in professional communities of practice. Since the establishment of MirandaNet Fellowship in 1992, members have been debating how education professionals can achieve more influence on policy makers. MirandaNet's contribution to the process of professional knowledge sharing is a series of events called MirandaMods derived from the unconference movement that promotes a democratic environment for collaboration in which all the participants are experts who develop the learning agenda. This approach contrast with a traditional conference or Technology, Entertainment, Design (TED) talks where an 'expert' decides what needs to be said.

UNDERPINNING THEORY

The underpinning pedagogical theory of these collaborative knowledge building strategies is the notion of 'liminal space'. The term was first used in anthropological studies to refer to the dissolution of order in the individual brain during liminality that creates a fluid, malleable situation that enables new institutions, new customs and new expressions of commonality to become established (Szakolczai 2000). Cuthell, Preston and Cych (2009) who have been developing the MirandaMod model for collaborative learning since 2005 argue that social liminal space in Web 2 can be conceptualised as anthropological and contains semiotic elements that can be visual as well as written.

PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE SHARING EVENTS

MirandaMods are underpinned by a combination of free technologies requiring a low bandwidth that are internationally accessible: virtual video meeting software with iChat transcripts, collaborative concept mapping, microblogging and video stream-

ing. MirandaNet members are also founding associates in the Education Future Collaboration that aims to develop more effective methods of publishing professional evidence through Mapping Educational Specialist KnowHow (MESH) using an accessible multimedia mindmap approach to present a diagrammatic database of subject-specific research-based knowledge about the teaching and learning of topics across the curricular disciplines. This way of working together in Web 2 can be visualized through the image of a rhizome (Sharples 2012), a plant stem that sends out roots and shoots that allow the plant to propagate itself through organic growth into the surrounding habitat.



DISCUSSION

There are many questions for the educator in these new collaborative processes. In this presentation the MirandaMod and MESH processes will be explained with examples of resources developed by the participants. The delegates will be encouraged to ask questions about setting up and running MirandaMod events for their own collaborative groups, especially those who wish to have more influence on the creation of policy.

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Biographies



Dr Christina Preston, Professor of Education Innovation at the University of Bedfordshire and the founder of the MirandaNet Fellowship that has more than 750 members in 80 countries. She advocates the application of digital technologies as a catalyst for enriching teaching and learning and specialises in action research based professional development programmes and research into global educational innovation.



Dr John Cuthell is the Research and Implementation Director for the MirandaNet Fellowship and has designed many research projects that have focused on virtual learning environments, visual learning, collaborative learning and action research. He has developed practice based research accreditation for teachers that focus on a range of e-learning and change management projects involving work with varied web-based communities.

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