Abstract

Learning Design Issues in Collaborative International Online Programs

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As educational institutions around the world are increasingly involved in the development and delivery of joint online programs, they are being forced to confront significant differences in how they view the teaching and learning process. As joint programs are planned, the focus is usually on aligning curriculum and the curriculum and course development process, admission and technical standards, administrative systems and infrastructure. Often little attention is paid to perspectives of teaching, the role of the instructor in the online environment, and underlying theoretical approaches to learning. Without proper attention to these learning design issues in the development process, significant problems can emerge in the delivery of joint programs that threaten their credibility and viability.

This presentation will discuss some of these learning design issues in the context of a joint online Master in Educational Technology that was launched in 2002 by the University of British Columbia and Tec de Monterrey in Mexico. UBC is a traditional, established research-intensive Canadian public university. Tec de Monterrey is a private, technical University that specializes in programs for career-minded young Mexicans and professional training and upgrading for working professionals. The presentation will examine the impact of the different organizational cultures of the two institutions on the learning design of this joint program and will discuss the importance of identifying and articulating:

Dominant teaching perspectives
Teaching and learning approaches
The role of the instructor in the online environment
The role of the learner in the online environment
Appropriate assessment strategies
Communication processes between instructors and learners and among learners

From a broader perspective the presentation will also address some of the cultural communications issues involved in developing and delivering joint programs involving institutions from different regions of the world.