

Report of the sixth ELMAC/TELIC* conference Sheffield October 9th 2010
Technology Enhanced Learning: Professional Networks and Communities
of Practice

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Introduction

For the sixth time the ELMAC/TELIC conference for students, tutors and alumni was held. The conference was held in Sheffield. The conference title was: Technology Enhanced Learning: Professional Networks and Communities of Practice. After an acquaintance bingo the participants participate in two workshops. The conference was closed by the consideration, how to continue? The conference (included the preparation) was supported by a wiki: <http://elmac2010.pbworks.com/Programme>

Morning session

The morning session - Key Questions for Professional Networks workshop - was led by Steef Woldinga and Herman Schimmel

In five groups the following tasks were discussed. Task 1: Discuss: What is the case? Who are the stakeholders? What is the professional network? How many stars? 1 star - disaster 5 stars - almost heaven. Task 2: Choose the worst case with the best potential using professional networks or networking. Task 3: upgrade your worst case into a five star case. In a plenary session every group present this worst case with the potential to upgrade it to a five star network. Task 4: How does it look like? Where did you come from? What did you do? The answers to identify the key issues are:

Usability

Categories

Access

Incentives

Overlap with other networks

Facilitator / champion

A choice of functionality
Face-to-face openness and transparency
Shared language
Group ownership / sense of belonging

Afternoon session

The afternoon workshop - Key themes for professional networks – was led by Helen Sharpe and Richard Pountney. In five groups the following issues were discussed

What meanings are shared by this community?
What common purpose might grow out of the meaning shared by this community?
How can this purpose be translated to effective action?
What is the natural evolution of learning in this community?

Principles already established?

We are empowered to challenge our assumptions
We are curious about who's doing what and what's happening out there
We like to share stories
We like think with images/metaphors of ... (Innovation and Change)
We like to play at deep level
We like to tap the expertise of people we trust

A summary of the discussion in my group:

What is meaningful? One of the answers was that participants want to socialise between alumni and students. Transfer our experience and support. One of the questions was: is there a difference between a community and a professional network? COP is about sharing practice. ELMAC/TELIC community is additional. Find the additional value in the informal contact. A common purpose is challenging and clarifying meanings. Shared understandings, openness, grow in knowledge and acceptance. Celebrate and embrace the differences. Weaving networks together. Informal information sharing. Value the community what it produce. Continuing professional development
There is a mega phonic function. Transfer of experiences and expertise. One of the suggestions was to have more interaction with business. Make a link with academic e-learning community and business community. More practical illustration for the academic community to see what happens. We are ambassadors. Bring a friend from a

business sector so the network can grow again. Changing the shape and orientation. Evolving. Growing the network by organising network meetings where we present our e-learning knowledge. Participants of other networks are invited too.

The close-down

The conference was closed with the consideration how to continue? The conferences approach, who started in 2005, shift from presentation of the work of dissertation students and a key note speaker to this 'open café' approach. I find both approaches valuable and in my opinion a blended concept together with guests would be valuable to try.

I visited, as one out of three participants, (total about hundred members of the community), all six conferences. Why? The first thought that passed my mind is: *Inspiration*. I meet my peers; I experienced new technology, tools and software. During this conference, we used the flip, we used a wiki, and we use software like wallwisher and animoto (for digital story telling). Moreover we discussed the additional value of e-learning. So simply and valuable is that for me. I hope that who is in charge will see my recommendation above and we have a seventh conference in Belgium!

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ELMAC / International Master Course/ e-learning, multimedia and consultancy/ Sheffield Hallam University- Nijmegen HAN University: 2001 -2008

TELIC /Master Course/ technology enhanced learning, information and change/ Sheffield Hallam University/ 2009 -

Photo's by Herman Schimmel: <http://www.flickr.com/search/?q=ELMAC2010>

