

Community, Technology and Education

6

Chapter Outline

Introduction

Communities of learners

Communities of practice and inquiry

Synchronous and asynchronous communication

Blended learning and community

M learning and community

Virtual worlds and community

Conclusions

Community, Technology and Education

6

Activity

Kruger (2000) suggests that communities of learners based on new technology will not look or feel like those found in a traditional classroom. Make a list of the best features of a community of learners located in the physical rather than the virtual world. What could you do, if anything, to make sure these features are available to a virtual community of learners?

Activity

A community of practice is not just people who meet because of shared interests such as films or antiques. Identify what a group of teachers meeting regularly for lunch should do if they wish to convert their recreational activity into a community of practice.

Activity

Both communities of practice and communities of inquiry provide models of how a community of learners might be organized. Summarize what the key differences are between the two. Identify which type of community you might use to encourage students to lead rather than just participate in learning and say whether this could be readily done virtually. State the reasons why you made these choices.

New Technology and Education

Activity

The characteristics of face-to-face (FtF) communication are that it is time dependent, has many opportunities for interactivity, low expediency, few opportunities for feedback, a low technological component, possible opportunities for peer to peer communication, anonymity is not possible, it is possible for the learner to control learning and takes insignificant time to establish. The characteristics of synchronous communication are that it is time dependent, has many opportunities for interactivity, medium expediency, many opportunities for feedback, a high technological component, many opportunities for peer to peer communication, anonymity is possible, it is probable that the learner can control learning and takes significant time to establish. The characteristics of asynchronous communication are that it is not time dependent, has limited opportunities for interactivity, high expediency, many opportunities for feedback, a medium technological component, opportunities for peer to peer communication, anonymity is possible, it is highly probable that the learner can control learning and takes time to establish (Olaniran, 2006). Using these characteristics as a guide, can you suggest reasons why asynchronous learning, rather than synchronous learning, has been at the heart of developments in distance learning and has been widely used in education?

Community, Technology and Education

6

Big question

If teachers fail to make proper use of the technologically mediated communities that are so attractive to the young, are schools in danger of becoming less relevant as agencies of education?