Learning & Teaching Conference 2010

Abstract 2C

Making students, not the lecturer, the subject matter experts: a version of the jigsaw classroom
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A new final year option course in positive psychology with 70 students was largely organised around student generated content. Students were divided into groups of 6, each group was allocated one of 12 topics, and required to produce an introduction to their topic that would be of maximal utility to the rest of the class (e.g. short summary, the best starter reference, connections between published evidence and unevidenced claims in the self-help literature, ...). These introductions were in the form of Moodle wiki pages, and each group also had their own Moodle forum so that they could work together apart from in face to face meetings. These facilities also aid assessment by keeping an extensive record of changes and contributions by each student. The design of the course, and the results of detailed feedback from the students are presented. (Six students have indicated a provisional interest in contributing a few minutes commentary on their experience as part of the talk.) Antecedents in the literature will be compared and contrasted with this design: Aronson's Jigsaw Classroom, computer supported cooperative lecture notes, traditional seminar teaching, Jim Baxter's use of "virtual" student groups in a first year course. The feedback showed strong valuing of the groupwork (both process and product), but more divided opinion about the relative lack of authoritative lecturer content delivery. This is discussed in relation to the paradox for good teaching: on the one hand there is much evidence showing that students value the passion and exposure to expertise when taught directly by staff who are teaching their personal research; on the other hand, however, constructivism and other educational work shows us that learning is best promoted when learners are required to discover and construct the knowledge themselves. These are conflicting approaches to good learning and teaching, and the tension is at its greatest in the final year: research-teaching linkages in conflict with enquiry-based learning?

Themes addressed:
- EBL (Enquiry Based Learning)
- Use of ...
- Moodle use for student groupwork wikis and forums
- Graduate Attributes: Research Teaching Linkages

More details: http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/talks/ltc10a.html