Chapter XVII

ActiveHealth:
Enhancing the Community of Physical and Health Educators Through Online Technologies

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Abstract

This chapter explores the perspectives of an instructional design team that designed and developed an online environment to facilitate the Australian physical and health educators' community of practice. The objective of the multidisciplinary design team was to determine what activities and supporting technologies would help invigorate senior members and initiate novice members to this well-established community. The chapter describes the community and the particular challenges it faces; details the design, development and implementation

processes for the online environment and activities; identifies the issues addressed during the design and implementation process; and, analyses the experiences of the initial implementation. The authors hope that the instructional design principles derived from examining the challenges and successes for this particular community of practice will support designers and researchers working with other communities to address similar issues.

Introduction

This chapter explores the perspectives of an instructional design team comprising academics from the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong in New South Wales, Australia. The team was formed to design and develop an online environment that could facilitate the Australian physical and health educators' community of practice. The objective of the multidisciplinary design team was to determine what activities and supporting technologies would help invigorate senior members and initiate novice members to this well-established community.

The chapter describes the community and the particular challenges it faces; details the design, development and implementation processes for the online environment and activities; identifies the issues addressed during the design and implementation process; analyses the experiences of the initial implementation; and, defines the next stages of community development.

Background

Any profession is associated with stages, collectively referred to as the *professional* or *career lifecycle*. All professions have (at minimum) an induction phase to begin, and an expertise phase subsequent to reaching proficiency in the knowledge and skills base of the particular profession. These stages and the factors that influence them provide an important background when thinking about how professionals participate in their community of practice.

There are several models delineating various career stages in the teaching profession (Fessler, 1985; Steffy & Wolfe, 2001; Guskey, 2002). All models consider the lifecycle from the point of entry into pre-service teacher-education programs, through (variously named) phases of growth and renewal, to the final stage of exit.

Fessler's (1985) model considers the interaction of career-stage with a teacher's personal and organisational environment. The personal environment is comprised of individual disposition, family, positive critical incidents, crisis, cumulative life experiences, and avocational outlets. The organisational environment is comprised of professional and industrial organisations, regulations, management style, pubic trust, and societal expectations.

As teachers move from their *pre-service* and *induction* stages through *competency building* and into *enthusiastic and growing*, they are eager to develop skills, support their peers, and investigate and implement new practices and innovations. At these stages teachers often

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