Learning Sciences and Online Learning Symposium Summary and Participant Responses to Gaps with respect to "Community"

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Abstract

The Learning Sciences and Online Learning Symposium is focused on how online learning might help meet the persistent challenges that discipline-based educational researchers have identified in teaching within their disciplines. In preparation for the symposium, participants were asked to reflect on three questions that will serve as the central themes for the symposium activities. The following represents one of the three prompts provided to participants.

What gaps exist in supporting community and providing for community interaction?

Common challenges (mentioned more than once) emerging from participant responses are listed below. Responses fell into two categories—one focused on learning experiences and the other focused on the intersection between learning sciences and online learning.

Common challenges identified by participants with respect to community and community interaction related to learning experiences

1. Challenges in finding understanding that research and literature exists, and then in translating that research into practice.
2. Challenges in preparing and supporting (training?) faculty to support community and community interaction in their courses, along with

the idea of needing "skilled moderators" to support community and how to support "meaningful" interaction.

3. Challenges with expectations in learners and instructor. Are learning experiences individual or group? What is the importance of group learning? What are the differences between "Learning within a group", "Learning on your own", "Learning to problem solve as a group".

4. Challenge that "most learning environments have not yet built out high quality community experiences" and that "threaded discussions are impoverished".

Common challenges identified by participants with respect to Community and Community Interaction related to the intersection between Learning Sciences and Online Learning

1. Challenges with the lack of mechanisms to bridge the gap to share "learning science research findings beyond education researchers to education and learning" technologists, as well as practitioners and researchers in these areas.

About the Symposium

Online learning is becoming central to educational transformation efforts at institutions around the world. The increasing interest and engagement in digital and online learning suggest an urgency to examine the intersection of learning sciences/education research with digital learning practice. Symposium participants will discuss how online learning might help meet the persistent challenges that discipline-based educational researchers have identified in teaching within their disciplines with a focus on the following three themes:

- Threshold and difficult to learn concepts, as well as common misconceptions, that online and digital environments can address
- Unique and different opportunities that are afforded in online and digital environments
- Community and community interaction in online and digital learning experiences