E-Learn 2007 Best Practice Session

A virtual community of practice to promote KM learning in university.

Michael Shulha and Kimiz Dalkir

An online community of practice (CoP) for graduate knowledge management (KM) students was designed, implemented and assessed. Students interacted with KM professors, researchers and practitioners to gain practical knowledge of both the discipline and the profession of KM. An innovative coding framework was used to analyze the discussion forum content of KM CoP forums in order to evaluate how successful the KM CoP was in meeting its objectives. While most assessments tend to focus on level of activity, typically measured in terms of number of members, number of postings and volume of content uploaded, an analysis of the discussions that occurred amongst community members provides a complementary source of data on not only how often people interacted online but what value-added results accrued from such interactions. The results showed that discursive analysis provided a better understanding of how a CoP can augment classroom learning by providing a more informal learning environment.

A number of critical themes were also identified with respect to what did not work as well as anticipated during the course of using the KM CoP to complement lecture-based classes. These are presented as a set of best practices that address CoP roles, membership and participation levels, community activities and technology issues.