

# **A Model for Evaluation of the Online Learning Experience**

Denise Stockley, Chris Groeneboer, Maria Bakardjieva\*

Faculty of Education, School of Computing Science,  
Dept. of Communication  
Simon Fraser University  
Burnaby, B.C. Canada V5A 1S6

604-291-3847, 604-291-3257, 604-291-4788

dstockle@sfu.ca, groen@cs.sfu.ca, mbakardj@sfu.ca

\*This paper was written collaboratively, and order of authorship is not a reflection of contribution.

In this poster, a model is presented for evaluating online learning. Situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) provides a theoretical basis for the model. According to this theory, learning is situated in activity, context, and culture. Through social interaction and collaboration, learners become engaged in a community of practice. This practice includes activities involving interaction with others, interaction with artifacts as representations of ideas (e.g., papers, projects, videos, concept maps), and interaction with artifacts which mediate communication and creation and manipulation of representations. In the context of online learning, computers mediate communication and manipulation of representational artifacts. This means that researchers and reflective practitioners have a unique opportunity to access the interactions of learners. For example, computer conferencing systems produce transcripts of the discourse which can then be evaluated.

Criteria for evaluation of the online learning experience include critical thinking, collaboration, and knowledge building. For example, is there evidence of critical dialogic engagement? A central issue in each of these criteria is the process learners become engaged in as they produce representations of their understandings. Further, design of the learning activity shapes that process. Therefore, a requirement of the model is that it address instructional design, process, and outcomes. The goal of the model is to provide a means for synthesizing examination of the online learning experience from different perspectives. Two case studies are presented in which the model has been applied. One case involved a graduate course, the other an undergraduate course. The technology used to deliver the courses was Virtual-U, a web-based networked learning environment to support collaboration and knowledge building. We conclude with an assessment of some of the implications of the model and future modifications of the model.