

MedEdWorld Online Global Collaborative Learning Network Using Adobe Connect: An Experience of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Medical Centre

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Online collaborative learning is an idea whose time has come.¹ In recent years, online collaborative learning networking has been seen as an expanding example within the tertiary level of education. Many educational institutions use the Internet for online collaborative learning.² MedEdWorld is an international online collaborative learning network initiated by the Association of Medical Education in Europe (AMEE), aimed at medical schools for sharing ideas and developing medical education globally. MedEdWorld offered a 60 minutes presentation and discussion session on the global medical problem “Stroke” using Adobe Connect software where the host team and presenter were located at Dundee University in the UK. Ten institutions participated from around the global with 8-10 clinical students and one facilitator from each institution. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Medical Centre (UKMMC) was one of the participants in this global online collaborative learning network, representing Malaysia. International collaborative learning networking is a challenging task. This paper outlines the research methodology and findings of UKMMC participants’ view on the MedEdWorld online collaboration.

A post-presentation survey was carried out about the MedEdWorld online collaborative learning held on 11 March 2009 at 07.30 GMT, 3.30 pm Malaysia time, where a total of eight year-4 clinical students and one facilitator participated from UKM medical centre. Participants were provided computers with headphones installed with Adobe Flash Player linked with an Internet connection. A web camera was attached to the facilitators’ computer. Adobe had set up a classroom for MedEdWorld that participants entered by logging in their name. To ensure that the presenter and the host could identify the participants and their country, participants had to log in with their name followed by an underscore and prefixed with the 2 code letters supplied by the host for the participants’ country. For example, a Malaysian student participant named Alex had to log in his name as MY_Alex. A facilitator participant added F with an underscore before their name followed by an underscore prefixed by the 2 code letters

for their country, e.g., if the facilitator named Sahin was from Malaysia, he logged in as MY_F_Sahin. The identification letters used as prefixes provided by the host for participants’ countries were Hong Kong = HK_, Sri Lanka = LK_, Romania = RO_, Indonesia = ID_, Philippines = PH_, Pakistan = PK_, Japan = JP_, Finland = FI_, Egypt = EG_, and Malaysia = MY_. The Adobe classroom was made up of a number of ‘pods’ and panels containing various types of media, the function of which were explained at the trial session before the final event. When the presenter started the presentation at the final event, all the participants viewed the content, listened and saw the presenter’s audio-video broadcast and responded to the presenter’s questions using ‘text chat’, ‘hand raise’ and yes/no options, depending upon the format requested. Participants also responded to a series of multiple-choice questions. To allow a participant to respond to a question, the host gave the participant a ‘talking privilege’. The host also gave the participant ‘enhanced participant rights’ so that the selected participant could be seen and heard by all, if his/her computer has a video camera. Thus a collaborative synchronous transnational learning opportunity on a global topic “stroke” based on a patient management problem was taken place. At the end of the collaborative discussion, a questionnaire about collaborative learning networking was administered to all UKMMC participants and the responses compiled and analyzed.

All the UKM medical centre participants, including the facilitator, indicated that the MedEdWorld online collaborative networking was an interesting and rewarding experience for them. The facilitator and most of the students (88%) felt that MedEdWorld online collaborative networking was an effective way to elicit different perspectives on aspects of a global topic and that it offered live participation in a transnational presentation. The facilitator and 75% of students considered that commenting through Adobe was comfortable. All participants believed that MedEdWorld provided an opportunity to internationalize UKMMC’s contribution to the global community, raising the images of Malaysia

in medical education world. However, participants indicated that upgraded Internet service would allow better interaction.

MedEdWorld as a global platform of communication, from live chat to asynchronous discussion, was exciting. It allowed the participants to share their perspectives on a common global problem. Implementing an effective online international collaborative learning networking requires careful planning and coordination, preparation of both students and facilitators,² upgraded Internet connection, and full institutional support. The UKM medical centre made it possible for Malaysia to take part in this networking due to its commitment to raising the standard of medical education. Medical schools should join in online global collaborative learning network aimed at further development of medical education.

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