Preliminary Findings: Values Classification

Classification Scheme

The fundamental values about learning and instruction reported in the case studies can be classified into five major groups; collaboration, community, interactive dialogue, learning theory, support, and virtual classroom. These groups were generated from a list of the values found in each case study. While most cases reported only one fundamental value about learning, two cases mentioned several learning values at different places in the case report, usually associating a different value with a specific instructional method that supported that value. Comprehensive classifications for each case can be found in the “Case Analysis Data” report.

Below, each value classification category is explained and exemplified.

Collaboration

Many cases (11 of 30) reported a fundamental value of collaboration between and among students, instructor(s), and other experts. Occasionally, the stated value of collaboration included a modifier such as “authentic problem-based” or “learner-centered.” In these cases, the values were classified as “collaboration” since that seemed to be the definitive term in the value phrase. Specific examples of collaboration values include:

- Online Collaborative Learning (C101, C103, C113, C116, C120, C121, C122, C125)
- Authentic Problem-based Collaboration (C112)
- Learner-centered Collaboration (C119)
- Learner-centered collaboration in rich environments supporting active learning (C107)

Community

Several cases (5 of 30) reported a fundamental value of establishing a learning community among the participants in the learning environment. Sometimes this sense of community was focused on student relationships, sometimes on student-instructor relationships, and in other cases it focused on student-external expert relationships. In every case in this study, the case author used the language “Online Learning Community.” Specific cases that reported a fundamental value of community include:

- Online Learning Community (C102, C105, C108, C115, C123, C124)

Interactive Dialogue

Many cases (7 of 30) reported a fundamental value of engaging students in interactive dialogue to facilitate learning. Sometimes this dialogue took place between students, among students in small groups, between students and instructor(s), or between students and external experts. If a case reported “discussion” as a fundamental value, it was classified as an “interactive dialogue” value since discussion and dialogue share many fundamental communication characteristics. “Dialogue” and “discussion” are more similar than they are different. In a similar sense, a case value of “interaction” was classified as “interactive dialogue” if it was clear that the intended mode of interaction was discussion. Specific examples of interactive dialogue values include:
• Dialog and discussion (C106)
• Meaningful interaction and discourse (C110)
• Open discussion (C126)
• Peer-peer interaction (C127)
• Student interaction (C109)
• Student reflection (as facilitated by student-instructor dialogue) (C117)
• Student-centered dialogue (C118)

Learning Theory
Several cases (5 of 30) reported a fundamental value that can be described as a learning theory, such as “active learning” or “problem-based learning.” These values were grouped together because they seemed to supercede the other value classifications. For example, a stated value of problem-based learning might lead to the assumption that the case author (or educator) values discussion, collaboration, and the formation of learning community as well, since these are often core features of problem-based learning environments. However, in the absence of the educator’s own explicit statements about these other values, I did not make assumptions about secondary values, rather I created a classification of values about learning theory. Specific examples of values about learning theory include:
• Active learning (C129)
• Discovery learning (C104)
• Problem-based learning (C128)
• Rich environments supporting active learning (C107)
• Self-directed learning (C130)

Support
A few cases (3 of 30) reported a fundamental value that can be classified as expressing support for students as they learn. This support could come from the instructor, peers, technical support staff, or other sources. Specific examples of values about supporting students in their learning include:
• Individualized instruction (C126)
• Peer helping (C126)
• Peer-helping in a supportive learning environment (C111)
• Supporting the student experience (C114)

Virtual Classroom
One case reported a fundamental value of creating a virtual classroom experience, an experience complete with key components of a traditional classroom such as live (streaming) audio, video, presentation slides, and channels for immediate feedback from the students to the instructor.
• Virtual classroom (C126)