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medialLABamsterdam

Roundtable Discussion Report

HvA Education Conference 2009

Team Open Course Ware

MediaLAB Amsterdam

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Education Conference HvA 2009

Thursday the 2nd of April we attended the Education Conference of the Hogeschool van Amsterdam (HvA). After a very good arranged lunch where people could get to know each other on an informal way the afternoon started with an introduction by Dymph van den Boom, member of the UvA-HvA board. She said the HvA wants to be a learning community. Three issues were raised which were needed to accomplish this goal. First there should be a focus on learning. Second, the HvA needs to feel responsible for the (good) results by all students. Finally there should be cooperation within the whole of the HvA. Students dropping out of college should be reduced by 50%. This sounded like an interesting angle that could be used to further promote our project.

Our job at the conference was leading the discussion table about Open Courseware (OCW). Six employees (four teachers, projectmanager of the MediaLAB and the Director of Information Strategy) from the HvA joined our table where our goal was to create awareness and discuss possibilities for IAM OCW. Especially Luc van der Pijl, the Director of Information Strategy, is important to us, as he is involved in the technical HvA implementations. If IAM OCW wants be a role model for other studies, Luc van der Pijl could have a positive influence on the implementation of Open Courseware for the whole HvA.

We started the discussion with an introduction about OCW at MIT and TU Delft. By making clear what has been done in the field of successful OCW, we hoped to generate a first positive impression of the project's goals. We decided to make a bold statement about copyright to start the discussion as this would lead to the most reactions:

"All material made by teachers is paid for by the school so they should give out their material for free".

The reactions were diverse. A good argument was that a lot of the teachers make materials in their free time so in theory the statement isn't true. The HvA doesn't regularly pay any extra hours spent by teachers making their materials. If the HvA wants to be a learning community, they need to be willing to spend money on the matters that create a learning community. OCW was considered to be an essential part of this. Another issue was the content of OCW. MIT uses OCW for around 1900 courses, available through downloads on their website. Teachers at MIT can choose to exclude some materials that they don't want to share publicly on a worldwide scale. On the matter that students wouldn't come to class once education becomes more digital and students can do their work from home, Jurjen Tak had very interesting option. Materials like audio and video should be partially published. It should be used as a sort of 'teaser' where students who listen to it before the lecture itself are interested in the rest of the lecture and already come up with questions, generate own ideas etc.

The second statement was: "*By using Open Courseware teachers benefit and students have more guidance*".

The reactions here were quite positive. We decided to use this statement because we want to convince teachers that they will benefit from OCW and in the teachers lunch this was quite hard to do. The reactions on the discussion table were very useful. We got a lot of tips for platform and what to think of when making an environment. The IAM OCW project, which after all serves as a sort of pilot, should not want to be too much at the same time. Making sure the materials are easily accessible is the main priority. We pinched the idea of starting with putting up the courses of the first year of IAM only. By showing potential new IAM students what materials they ought to expect in their first year, they could benefit in making their decision either to go ahead with the IAM study, or not. This is a great benefit to the potential student, for the teachers as they have more motivated students in their classroom and to the HvA itself as it serves the goal to reduce the dropout rate by 50%. Everyone around the table reacted in a positive way to these arguments.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the afternoon was that OCW is a very good initiative and that similar projects need to keep popping up so the HvA will notice that it is an important step forward. We have made more contacts with people who know more about OCW that are willing to help.

Ideas and things to take in account:

- Make audio and video files for courses with enough information to interest students like a teaser. To see the whole lecture they have to come to class.
- Create the environment in the form of a website with a possibility for teachers to communicate with each other and improve each other's work. There will be no communication possibilities for students.
- We need to look at options for screening/moderating material before it comes online because the quality of the material is very important.
- In respect of the last point we need to set up standards for uploading materials.
- Focus on ten IAM courses online for the pilot.
- Keep the Education Conference forum alive.