Designing learning environments to meet indigenous cultural needs

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Over the last two years Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi (Awanuiārangi), an indigenous learning institution in Whakatane, New Zealand, has undertaken an external review to increase the evidence base of current e-learning knowledge and capability to support and contribute to the future of e-learning activities across the institution.

At Awanuiārangi e-learning is incorporated into a distinct online philosophy and methodology referred to as eWānanga. eWānanga is an English-Māori hybrid term used to represent the amalgamation of two concepts; one is based on the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in education and the other on Matauranga (Māori Knowledge). The eWānanga kaupapa illustrates a philosophy founded on flexible teaching and learning standards that reflect Māori teaching practices within a mixed mode delivery structure. It is this unique blending of modern educational technologies with Māori knowledge, values and attitudes on teaching and learning that shape and define Awanuiārangi distinctive approach to e-learning.

The executive team at Awanuiārangi recognised that any review should provide an understanding of the impact information and communication technologies (ICT) would have on learning, teaching, support and business operations of the organisation. Given this requirement the review was guided by an established and proven framework that investigated the three “pillars” of e-learning implementations: context, content and capability. Context: These are infrastructural/technical factors that shape and influence the fitness of Awanuiārangi e-learning environment to grow into the future. Content: These are the organisational factors that emphasise the ‘uniqueness’ of the Awanuiārangi role in providing its stakeholders with authentic, relevant, timely and appropriate knowledge and skills to improve their learning achievements. Capability: These are the personal factors that help build the competence, confidence and understanding of all participants, thus determining the ultimate success of e-learning in Awanuiārangi.

This presentation will illustrate how Awanuiārangi has first, used the three column design of a popular social media application to design a user friendly interface. Secondly, used an open source learning management system (LMS) to bind of a range intergraded services, (media-streaming, screen capture, and web-conferencing. The presentation will then explore the tools, analytics and learner feedback; it may use to evaluate the systems acceptance and impact.

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