Reflective Analysis on Knowledge-Building Community: Case of a Graduate Course

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Abstract: This study focused on investigating design issues associated with establishing a classroom-based Knowledge-Building Community. Three design issues for establishing a KBC were investigated: (1) How to coordinate the efforts of individuals effectively in building collective knowledge, (2) How to support self-directed, knowledge-creation processes of individuals, (3) How to facilitate students’ ownership of a Knowledge-Building Community.

An instructional team designed a graduate course, Alternate Views of Teaching and Learning (Altviews), to foster a Classroom-Based Knowledge-Building Community toward studying alternative methods of teaching and learning. Instructional activities (interventions) for making effective distribution of individuals efforts, facilitating self-directed learning, and promoting the ownership of the KBC were embedded into the Altviews course. The course had three main phases: the Guided Reading Phase, the Sort and Sequence Phase, and the On-line Research Group Phase. The course was supported by Construe, a type of groupware, and Web Board conferencing software. The purpose of this article is to provide instructional

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designers with insights or guidelines for designing a Knowledge-Building Community in classroom settings by describing the graduate course designed with Knowledge-Building Community approach and reflecting on the course in terms of fostering a Knowledge-Building Community. In this article, the design features of the Altviews course, reflection on the Altviews course and emerging issues in building a Knowledge-Building Community were described. Also, implications for the design of Knowledge-Building Community were suggested.

Keywords: knowledge-building community, instructional design, coordination mechanism, ownership, self-directed learning

I. Introduction

Knowledge-Building Communities (KBCs), also known as communities of learners, have been suggested as an alternative approach for current classroom teaching and learning. Scardamalia and Bereiter (1994), who first used the term of "Knowledge-Building Communities", claimed that "schools need to be restructured as communities in which the construction of knowledge is supported as a collective goals". KBCs contrast in a variety of ways with teacher-centered approaches that emphasize direct instruction (for example, lecture). A KBC is defined as a group of individuals in which all members actively participate in generating and advancing the knowledge of the collective on common knowledge problems that require the improvement of understanding (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1994; Hewitt, 1996; Hewitt & Scardamalia, 1998). In