

Abstract

Social constructivist learning theories and distributed cognition are central to most online course designs and the desire for student relationships for cognitive and motivational support. In addition, there are a lot of variations in how learners arrive at an online programme. Here we present an innovative teaching and learning initiative relating to the on boarding of multiple cohorts of non-traditional post-experience online learners, geographically dispersed across 14 countries and multiple nationalities. There is a need to support this pre-arrival stage and start the process of building resilience to the elements of engagement that learners will face as the programme progresses. The induction module explored here is a 2 week compulsory module whose objectives are multifaceted across the spatial, technological, time and emotional components of online learning. Comprising a suite of paced synchronous and asynchronous interactions which are constructively aligned with learning outcomes, the module is supported by a cohort of skilled moderators internationally based, in addition to leveraging the lived experiences of past students who can provide both a motivational and communicative scaffold to the process. Whilst it is not possible to standardise learning, the design of this module focuses on the creation of a safe social space that fosters and supports both active learning and embraces diversity. The emphasis is on students own experiences given their rich and diverse professional and cultural backgrounds, and these unique perspectives both create fertile grounds for exploration and empower learners to assume control their own learning journey.