The First Steps Curriculum

This course is structured around Topics, Activities and Guest presentations. In this message I introduce the topics which address the curriculum directly.

First steps curriculum

The curriculum is realised through a **resource-based learning** approach. There are six topics:
1. Supporting learning (Week 0)
2. Reflective practice (Week 1)
3. Teaching groups (Week 2)
4. Lecturing (Week 3)
5. Feedback (Week 4)
6. Evaluation (Week 5)

Although realised slightly differently one to another, in concept each topic is structured around three main components:
- A multimedia introduction to the topic with transcript
- A wiki seeded with resources relevant to the topic
- A discussion forum.

You may choose to engage with all these topics or only some of them.

The idea is that you should listen to, or watch the intro, engage in the discussion about the topic, browse the resources, reading more deeply those that interest you, and contribute others to the wiki, which you might wish to share. Your own contributions to the course are important. You should feel free to add items to the topics, which are relevant and which you can license to share.

Resource based learning

Our resource-based learning approach is conceived around
- Dialogue
- Autonomy, and
- Open Educational Resources.

When I say "**dialogue**" I mean two things.
- Talking together, of course. We learn from each other, in conversation. This is related to the concept of autonomous learning. Learning is not just being told something, it involves questioning and reflecting back on things: having a conversation with the ideas themselves.

- But, I also mean "dialogic" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialogic) in a wider sense, as attributed to Bakhtin (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bakhtin). As Bakhtin put it:

> *verbal discourse is a social phenomenon - social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image [i.e. phonology, accent, etc] to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning.* (Bakhtin 1981: 269)

Learning resources are texts. And, all texts, this one, our learning designs, songs, articles, novels, QA reports, essays, poems, love letters, etc are in dialogue more or less directly with other texts - and even to wholeness of language - that has come before. That is to say this course IS teaching.

By "**autonomy**" I mean individual agency and responsibility. And, of course this can be read simply as taking responsibility for one's own learning and encouraging our students to do the same. But like dialogue, **agency** is also a complex concept. We act in **communities** (with institutions) where there are **rules** and **roles** that circumscribe our action. You might want to see Engestrom (1999) on this. As teachers we inhabit and act a role. As do students. Can we get beyond the roles as set out in our communities?

Finally, our approach is conceived around **open educational resources** (OER). And I say this without capital letters. There are more - and less - strict interpretations of what open educational resources are and the question really runs deep through this course. Because, to me, resource-based approaches (RBL) to learning are problematic. And, of course, openness is also a challenging issue.

So, dive into the curriculum and make it yours.

References

Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1981. The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.

Engeström, Yrjö. 1999. "Learning by Expanding: An Activity - Theoretical Approach to Developmental Research (later Edition)." http://communication.ucsd.edu/LCHC/MCA/Paper/Engestrom/expanding/toc.htm.