**Bid to CEBL for support in evaluating a WIKI used on the MPH**

**Introduction**
After watching a '*show and tell*' about wiki's blogs and twitter by Alex Hardman of the Faculty  Graduate Training Team in December 2008 we thought that a wiki might be useful in a new online unit that was being developed for the Masters of Public Health (MPH). Two thirds of the online MPH 280 students are international, many from developing countries. Most of these students are health workers or researchers continuing to work in their own jobs, whilst studying. In 2008/9 we launched our first unit specifically aimed at the needs of students living and working in low income countries, this was '*Malaria, HIV/AIDS & TB management; health service challenges'*. One of the aims of this course was to enable students from different  countries to share experiences.

**The Pedagogic Task**
In week 6 of the unit (April 09) students were set the flowing task. They were divided into 6 groups (Ghana, Nigeria (x2), Uganda, Malawi & Pakistan) of 6 -7 people , then told to imagine that they had represented their country at a WHO conference in Botswana concerning Product Supply Deliver of malaria related products. They were told that research had shown that there were six problems common to most countries (see box 1). Then tasked with going back to their 'countries' to perform a situation analysis (see box 2).  About half the students in each country group were either from the country or were working in it. The other students were divided between the groups. The 6 intercalating medical students were divided between the groups.

Box 1 & 2

**The Wiki**
The wiki within BLACKBOARD (our VLE) was not ready for use so Cheryl investigated the use of the Confluence wiki from Word Press. The e-learning team interpreted the task instructions and tailored the word press area for the task; this included the development of instructions and FAQ's for students.

The first part of the task was an introductory exercise which was designed to help students to get to know each other better, but also to teach them to the skills necessary for the wiki.  Cheryl, Stewart and Moyra supported the 45 students during the task over a three week period.

**The experience**
Our quick and dirty assessment is that basically it went 'pretty well'. Some groups appeared to gel and work together from the beginning, others started more slowly, some elected leaders and others worked in a much 'flatter' way. The groups largely met their objectives. We experienced a browser glitch in the final weekend. Most students appeared to enjoy it, though only a few found it very challenging.

Overall we were very pleased and hope to do similar exercise again next year, but we are aware that we have only scratched the surface of evaluating what really went on. We have the following sources to use for evaluation.

- The wiki
- The associated discussion boards
- The associated chat rooms
- The end of unit evaluation

**The bid**

We would like to work with and learn from staff at CEBL to do the following;

1. Evaluate the use of the Wiki, both from a pedagogic and technical perspective
2. Prepare new / generic instructions for using a wiki in a similar situation
3. To disseminate the good practice and lessons from this exercise

The MPH relies on academics, e-learning staff and administrators in equal measure. Two of the team cited below were not actively involved in this exercise but would be in the future, so we would like to involve them in this exercise.

Katie Reed- Course Leader*
Cheryl Belch – FMHS e-learning technologist
Moyra – FMHS e-learning technologist
Stewart Taylor– FMHS / MPH e-learning technologist
John Owens FMHS / MPH e-learning technologist
Nick Cunningham – MPH administrator

We have put in this bid with the full support of the FMHS e-learning manager Dianne Bennett. The latest we will complete step 1 & 2 of this exercise would be Jan 2009 when we will be running the wiki again. However we see step 3 lasting until June 09.

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