CHAPTER 8

SUPPORTING ADULT LEARNERS’ AUTHENTIC LEARNING EXPERIENCE BY OPTIMIZING COLLABORATIVE GROUP WORK IN DISTANCE LEARNING COURSES

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The target audience of this case study is current and future faculty interested in designing and teaching distance learning courses for learners in higher education institutions. The case involved adult learners’ collaborative group work in an online evaluation course in which authentic tasks comprised the major pedagogy. A guiding principle for the overall study was that adult learners working in groups collaboratively to complete authentic tasks constitute a pedagogically strong approach to satisfy their needs for professional development. This case study is nested within the context of a two-year multi-phased design research project; it reports major challenges learners encountered during group work on authentic evaluation projects and what supports and scaffolding successfully resolved those challenges.