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Paper

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Enhancing Students' Academic Experience Through Lifelong Learning Mechanisms

The use of networked learning implies expanded possibilities for universities to develop and deliver courses in a collaborative way and reduces limitations caused by geographic and societal distances. It is possible to combine students, academics and the commercial enterprise with different professional backgrounds and spheres, into a cooperative development process that would facilitate knowledge transfer and foster lifelong learning within a community.

In this paper, a model for achieving this objective is presented and evaluated using specific examples. The networking model creates linkages between students and SMEs to successfully overcome various barriers to enhance students' academic experience. A survey of SMEs in South-east Queensland region indicated that most SMEs look up to universities for continuous improvement and innovation of products and processes, for which they have to constantly develop and update their knowledge base in response to contemporary technological and social change. However, existing systems do not facilitate SME participation within the university, thereby limiting these objectives. We present an analysis of the various ways in which existing resources and linkages can be tapped to overcome the barriers preventing knowledge transfer. Recommendations are made to implement the model on a small scale and test its full functionality in the region to develop strategic partnerships between universities and SMEs.