ETEC565A: May 2017

Learning Technology Selection: Design and Application

Assignment 4 Reflection

I found working on the LMS component of this course very beneficial. I had been toying with the idea of converting my labs into a blended format but the amount of work involved seemed very daunting, and I wasn't sure where I would find the time to generate the necessary resources – as Bates (2014) pointed out, time spent on producing teaching content can be significant and may come at a cost of time spent on other things.

This is why I feel this experience has been so valuable – it has provided me with some of that badly needed time. Working on the past few assignments has given me a good start on one of my courses and has also given me a better idea of some of the components that I will likely want to include in the learning modules I prepare in the future.

While I didn't agree with a few points of the feedback I received on my initial attempt, I found that much of what Natasha had pointed out made a lot of sense and I went back to make some adjustments to my original work before continuing with my latest learning module.

As I worked on this assignment, I thought back to my initial "flight path" and the 7 Principles of good teaching practice proposed by Chickering and Ehrmann (1996). I specifically wanted to focus more on developing/strengthening my use of Principles 2, 3 and 4.

Principle 2. Good Practice Develops Reciprocity and Cooperation Among Students (Chicekring & Ehrmann, 1996)

I chose to develop this through my use of the discussion tool. In the discussions I set up for my students, I presented my students with problems that they would have to try to solve. I did my best to present problems that had more than just one simple solution, ones that might take some back-and-forth between students to fully resolve. In essence I asked students to collaborate and figure things out based on the information that had been presented to them in the learning module.

I also included a small assignment to be discussed in smaller groups before being submitted for grading. Again encouraging collaboration and co-construction of knowledge.

Principle 3. Good Practice Uses Active Learning Techniques (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996)

This principle deals with the idea of immersing students into a learning situation, which is what labs are mean to accomplish. One of the obstacles to this is the need to spend lab time on introductory material. By converting the labs into a blended format, I will be freeing up time for a more authentic experience which will now be able to include more thorough data analysis.

Principle 4. Good Practice Gives Prompt Feedback (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996)

Prompt feedback is something I have struggled with in the past and felt that this aspect of teaching could definitely be aided by technology.

Unfortunately, my online quizzes will likely still need to be partially graded by me – I don't feel using only easily auto-graded question types (ie. true/false, multiple choice, etc) would allow me to truly assess student knowledge in my courses.

However, I have integrated self-tests into my learning modules to allow students to gain instant feedback on their understanding of the presented material. I have also made an effort to make the feedback they receive as

informative as possible.

I have also done my best to address the remaining principles:

Principle 1. Good Practice Encourages Contacts Between Students and Faculty (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996)

Not only have I posted my email address and office hours fairly prominently near the top of the page, I have also provided a forum for students to post their questions on the site. Not only does that provide yet another avenue for students to contact me, it also allows them to get their questions answered in a way that benefits the whole class.

Principle 5. Good Practice Emphasizes Time on Task (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996)

Here, Chckering and Ehrmann (1996) specifically point to easy access to important resources. I have made an effort to do that by directly posting any research articles I want them to have directly within the LMS. I have also ensured that anything that they will need to print for the course is available in PDF format, so it can be easily saved and printed. I have also made an effort to keep those PDFs as short as possible, to minimize the use of their resources.

Principle 6. Good Practice Communicates High Expectations (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996)

I always try to communicate this expectation to my students in class, but I've also made a point of making my students read primary literature (initially with my help) and asking them to emulate some of what they see there. For example, in the assignment I posted in the Learning Module, I specifically ask for a "journal quality" table or figure with the appropriate title or caption.

Practical Aspects

Because I wanted to be sure my efforts here, in Moodle, could benefit me in the future, in a different LMS, I chose to produce as much of the content as possible in a standard format that would be compatible with numerous LMS systems.

While there are numerous LMS systems available, there are some standards that most, if not all, support. One of them is SCORM (Fenton, 2017), which is why I chose to develop my learning modules in a program called EXE Learning (http://exelearning.net/?lang=en). It is an open source, cross-platform, authoring software for educational content which is capable of exporting materials in various common formats including SCORM 2004.

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