How Do We Foster the Quality Of Hybrid Courses in Teacher Education?

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Abstract: This paper describes and discusses an undergraduate teacher education course that was converted into a hybrid format. When taught for the first time, data was collected on instructional (online activities) and non-instructional (contextual issues, learner characteristics) factors, as well as data on student perceptions of their online experiences. When this data was analyzed, the study identified trends and design elements that could be applied to help improve the quality of the hybrid course when redesigned and taught again. The paper recommends ways of fostering quality in the design of hybrid courses and for supporting instructors who are new to online course design in teacher education programs.

Introduction

New instructional technologies have opened doors to a wide range of educational settings, which in turn ushered in new ways of teaching and learning (McLinden et al, 2006). Continuous introduction of these technologies has led to more experimentation on what works online for diverse contexts (Brett & Nagra, 2005). Experimentation with course design often happens when designing a course for the first time. The goal though, is for a more systematic design of instruction, especially in subsequent course redesign.

The systematic design of instruction requires that non-instructional factors, namely needs assessment, context analysis, and audience analysis, be considered in the same way that instructional factors such as integration of online activities are part of regular course design process. Needs assessment is a "process of pinpointing reasons for gaps in performance or a method for identifying new and performance needs" (Gupta, 1999). Contextual analysis "provides information about environmental factors that will affect the design and delivery of instruction" (Morrison, Ross, & Kemp, 2004, p. 69). Audience analysis involves identification of "learner characteristics most likely to have an impact on instructional outcomes" (Morrison, Ross, & Kemp, 2004, p. 69). In this initial inquiry, data collection focused on gaining better understanding of the students through their characteristics (i.e., personality and thinking styles) that may contribute towards active participation and success in online-enhanced courses. Beyond personality and thinking styles (Garcia et al, 2008; Solimeno et al, 2008; Sun, et al, 2008), other learner characteristics influencing student behavior and performance are gender, academic major and course load.

This paper describes and discusses an undergraduate teacher education course that was converted into a hybrid format. When taught for the first time, data was collected on instructional (online activities) and non-instructional (contextual issues, learner characteristics) factors, as well as data on student perceptions of their online experiences, so that when this data was analyzed, the study was able to identify trends and design strategies that can be applied to help improve the quality of the hybrid course when it is redesigned and taught again. The paper concludes with recommendations for best ways of fostering quality in the design of hybrid courses and for supporting instructors who are new to online course design in teacher education programs.

Thank you for reviewing one of my publications.

Baylen, D. M., Santiago, R. & Nakayama, M. (2009). How do we foster the quality of hybrid courses in teacher education? In I. Gibson et al. (Eds.), *Proceedings of Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference 2009* (pp. 1732-1737). Chesapeake, VA: AACE. Retrieved from http://www.editlib.org/p/30866.

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