Creating Engaged Learners and Digital Citizens

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Abstract

We are living in an age where digital technology is ubiquitous…apps, mobile devices, eBooks, MOOCs, Open Source, the Cloud. For students, this rapidly changing digital landscape will be a way of life through their school careers and into the workplace. In their lives, being digitally savvy and maintaining an openness to lifelong learning will increasingly be a prerequisite for success. This workshop session will focus on the ways in which digital learning experiences can be matched with academic content so that students become active and engaged digital citizens. Participants are encouraged to bring along a computer or tablet (although this is not a prerequisite) and be prepared for a digital learning experience. Participants will also be provided with a digital document containing step-by-step directions for all of the presented strategies and techniques.

Description of the proposed workshop

This workshop session will focus on the ways in which faculty can promote students' success by creating assignments and learning experiences that connect course content while also engaging them with a wide variety of digital tools.

Learning Outcomes

1. To articulate the components of backward design in course creation.
2. To examine the potentially powerful role of digital technology in course design.
3. To evaluate a variety of digital tools, appropriate to the processes of teaching and learning.
4. To develop a plan for the inclusion of digital assessments and learning experiences in the courses they teach.

Overview of workshop plan

The design of this workshop session is primarily interactive in nature. Participants will be invited to engage in conversations around several key themes. Additionally, participants will be provided with a digital document summarizing all of the areas discussed along with links to tutorials and step-by-step directions.

The Changing Parameters of Knowledge

We are living in a digital world. As part of this experience, faculty and students must reconceptualise the manner in which knowledge is defined and accessed. Where in times past, faculty could be primarily engaged in the role of content delivery, they must now serve as guides and facilitators, helping their students locate and evaluate information from a variety of sources (Garner, in press).

Exploring the Context of Course Design as a Planning Framework

This portion of the workshop will provide participants with a brief overview of the backward design approach to course design (Fink, 2005; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). This structure provides a tension that holds the components in aligned tension with one another (i.e., learning outcomes, assessment strategies, learning experiences).

Decision-making and tool selection

After these brief introductory sections, with conversations about the manner in which they blend into the current practices of participants, the emphasis will shift toward examination of a buffet of digital tools that participants may wish to consider as a way of engaging their students in active learning.

Presentation tools

Perhaps the most frequently used and frequently misused forms of technology are PowerPoint and Prezi. Participants will examine ways of creating presentations that invite engagement and interest (e.g., effective use of graphics, interactive tools, embedded videos).

Open source content

There is a growing abundance of Open Educational Resources (OER) in virtually every academic discipline. Participants will have a guided tour of the most popular locations (e.g., Merlot, Creative Commons, Open Stax).

Social Media and Out-of Class Learning Tools

Social media is an integral part of our students' lives (Selwyn, 2011). This part of the session will focus on the manner in which the power of these venues to create collaborative learning in several of the key social media locations (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, DubSmash).

Assessment tools

In addition to the creation of web-based learning experiences, faculty can also create interactive assessment tools (e.g., online quizzes, rubric generators, plagiarism and grammar tools). We will examine the ways in which these tools can be integrated into content learning.

Website and e-folio tools

Creating a web presence will become increasingly important in the lives of our students. Faculty can assist students in learning the skills of website creation (e.g., Weebly, Wix) and connect this process with demonstrated learning in the academic discipline.

Movie/screencast/animation tools

Another lifelong skill, that can connect with virtually any academic discipline is the creation movies and animations. Participants will be exposed to a variety of tools that only require a computer, microphone, and camera (e.g., Tellagami, Voki, Powtoon, Screencastr). We will explore the varied ways in which these tools can be integrated into the learning process.

References

Fink, D. (2003). Self-directed guide to designing courses for significant learning.
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