Using Research About Online Learning to Inform Online Teaching Practice

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Overview

• Introductions
• Teaching presence
• Online discussions
• Rubrics
• Online engagement
• Summary
Teaching Presence Defined

• “The design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes.” (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, Archer, 2001)
Teaching Presence Roles

• Instructional Design and Organization: course goals, course sequence- sessions, layout and navigation of materials and tools. Creating a path for the students

• Facilitating Discourse: instructor – student, student - student

• Direct Instruction: content presentation, content resources (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, Archer, 2001)
Teaching Presence Factors

• Instructional Design and Directed Facilitation (combining Facilitating Discourse and Direct Instruction) accounted for three quarters of the variability in student ratings of teaching presence (Shea, Sau Li, Pickett, 2006)
Teaching Presence in Practice

- Scaffolding course content via Course Schedule (Instructional Design)
- Discussion Participation (Facilitating Discourse): Discussion Prompts, Instructor extending discussion, student discussion leaders
- Presenting Content (Direct Instruction): Module Overview, Connect meetings to introduce or review
What now?

- “… instruction conducted entirely online is as effective as classroom instruction but no better.” (p. 18)
- “Blends of online and face-to-face instruction, on average, had stronger learning outcomes than did face-to-face instruction alone.” (p. 19) (Means, et. al., 2010)
Sage on the Side

- Too little or too much instructor leadership not as effective as a balance of instructor guidance and student contribution. (Zhao, et. al., 2005)
Effective Online Discussions

• Discussion activities are essential in all university teaching

• Dialog between students and instructors as well as between students is important for student growth (Bowen, 2012)

• Emerging research about effective online discussions provides guidance on how to lead such activities
Basic Ingredients of Discussion

• Rovai (2007) suggested that to be effective online instructors need to attend to both design and facilitation

• Design includes:
  • Motivation
  • Ground rules
  • Opportunities

• Facilitation includes:
  • Appropriate social presence
  • Equity
Additional Perspectives

• Additional research (Gao, Wang, & Sun, 2009) has considered the importance of
  • Cognitive processes
  • Argumentation
  • Social knowledge construction
• Gao et al. developed a model for online discussions called the Productive Online Discussion Model
• Gets at the function of discussions in student learning
Discuss to Comprehend

Improved Understanding

Discuss to Construct Knowledge

Discussion to Critique

The Productive Online Discussion Model
Contributions from Multiple Dispositions

1. Discuss to Comprehend
   - Actively engage in such cognitive processes as interpretation, elaboration, making connections to prior knowledge.

2. Discuss to Critique
   - Carefully examine other people’s views, and be sensitive and analytical to conflicting views.

3. Discuss to Construct Knowledge
   - Actively negotiate meanings, and be ready to reconsider, refine and sometimes revise their thinking.

4. Discuss to Share Improved Understanding
   - Actively synthesize knowledge and explicitly express improved understanding based on a review of previous discussions.

   (Gao et al., 2009)
Rubrics for Online Discussions

• Gao et al. also emphasize the importance of having a rubric to score student discussions
• Rubrics show students what is expected ahead of time
• Eccarius (2012) found that use of a rubric by teacher education students in asynchronous online discussions improved and demonstrated more higher order thinking
Effective Online Engagement

- Consistent interactions between students and the instructor is important for effective online instruction
- Bowen (2012) suggests the use of a variety of communication tools to foster interaction
  - Email
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
What Experienced Instructors Say

• York and Richardson (2012) conducted an interview study of experienced online instructors
  • All participants had taught online for 10 or more years
• Findings identified certain instructor behaviors that can enhance student engagement in online classes
  • A follow up study is planned to replicate findings
Engagement Factors
(York & Richardson)

1. Group work
2. Course environment
3. Model use
4. Community
5. Discussion question type/assessment
6. Feedback type and medium
7. Immediacy behaviors
8. Discourse guidelines (rubric)
9. Instructor participation
What Students Say

- Australian researchers (Nandi, Hamilton, & Harland, 2012) conducted a study of student perceptions of quality online engagement

- 11 themes emerged as important in how the quality of student participation can be understood

- The right balance of student- and instructor leadership is important
Themes Related to Student Engagement (Nandi et al. 2012)

1. Asking questions
2. Answering questions
3. Acknowledgement of understanding
4. Asking for feedback
5. Clarification
6. Critical discussion of contributions
7. Ideas from interaction
8. Opinions regarding the topic of instruction
9. Providing Feedback
10. Sharing own experience and knowledge
11. Suggesting multiple solutions

Summary

• Instructor presence in online instruction is essential
• Too much or too little can hurt student learning outcomes
• Discussion is one form of interaction in online classes
• It needs to include both design and facilitation
• Both student and teacher participation are important to learning outcomes
Resources


Resources


Resources


