

Blended Learning for Communications Faculty Development

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Abstract

This paper will examine and discuss the affordances and constraints inherent in the use of a Learning Management System (LMS) for the purposes of professional development within the Communications department of a Canadian-based community college operating in the Middle Eastern state of Qatar. In Fall 2013, Desire2Learn (D2L) will be introduced for usage in a wide range of courses at CNA-Q. Faculty assigned to teach D2L courses will be expected to design shells for their classes and use these to facilitate the blended delivery of their courses. Many of these instructors will have little (if any) experience using blended learning in their course delivery or with an LMS in the context of teaching. Faculty members will need training in D2L and also ongoing professional development in blended learning generally in order to ensure that they feel comfortable bringing this element into their courses. This paper outlines a plan for ongoing Professional Development of Communications instructors over the course of one academic year. Particular reference is made Garrison and Vaughn Community of Inquiry (CoI) conceptual framework [1] as well as Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory [2]. It is hoped that this plan will help instructors move towards an optimal level of self-efficacy with regards to the usage of the LMS and blended learning. The planned Professional Development will be multi-faceted and include face-to-face meetings at the team and departmental levels, as well as through a dedicated D2L shell (i.e. the Professional Development will, effectively, be in blended format). It is hoped that this Professional Development format will provide instructors greater exposure to theory underpinning sound usage of blended learning, and translate into an educational experience which enhances student engagement and success in their English courses.

References

- [1] Garrison, D. R., & Vaughan, N. (2008). Blended Learning in Higher Education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- [2] Rogers, E.M. (2003). Diffusion of innovations (5th ed.) [Kindle version]. Available from: <http://www.amazon.ca/Diffusion-Innovations-5th-Edition-ebook/dp/B000FC0NH8>