ETEC 564: Final e-Portfolio Synthesis Reflection

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• Flight Path Revisited

The MET program is allowing me to more effectively participate in learning communities that explore creative applications of technology to improve student learning (NETS, 2008). This program has also encouraged me to evaluate and reflect on current research and professional practice in the use of emerging digital tools and resources in support of improving the effectiveness of student learning. Specific goals that I mentioned in my Flight Path include learning how to incorporate a variety of multimedia aspects in Moodle and explore the use of quizzes, forums, resources and wikis. My aim was to create a Moodle course shell that offers an interactive experience where students can revisit topics relevant to their learning and provide interesting insights during their learning journey.

Another focus of my Flight Path was to increase classroom collaboration and communication as well as to incorporate more fully an opportunity for continued self-assessment. For effective learning, students "must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences and apply it to their daily lives" (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Utilizing the assessment features on Moodle would contribute to this goal. I wish to increase the collaboration, online communication, and interactivity of the courses that I teach. I am also interested in Integrating Digital Learning Objects (DLOs) in the Science Classroom (Janson & Janson, 2009), particularly in Chemistry 11 and 12. "DLOs challenge students to question, investigate, analyze, synthesize, problem solve, make decisions, and reflect on their learning" (Janson & Janson, 2009, para 4).

• Reflection on e-Learning toolkit experience

The e-Learning toolkit was very helpful in navigating through the intricacies of my LMS site creation. My particular areas of interest centred on the Learning Management System page, in this case specifically Moodle, as this is the LMS that is most easily implementable in my school district. I found the links to instructional videos, Moodle information pages, and discussion forums a very valuable and productive tool to completing this task.

In working through the page on Synchronous Communication Tools, I realized that I have used many of these applications before, yet I have come to realize that I could implement many of these applications for more productive purposes in my own teaching strategies. Wimba and Elluminate seem to be viable options that could even be implemented in the Moodle course shell that I am building. I already have an account with Elluminate and can currently host small classes on that platform.

I have been exposed to some digital video production in a previous MET course and surprised myself by really enjoying it. The toolkit page addressing production and post-

production of digital images and videos was very interesting to me, now that I know the possibilities and my own capabilities in this area. Time is the key to be able to work through these digital tools and improve my proficiency and explore different applications.

In fact, I would like to have the time available to fully explore *all* the areas of this e-Learning toolkit, as I believe that there are limitless applications to learn and try. I have discovered many useful tools throughout the MET program, and this e-Learning Toolkit resource is a great location to work through various opportunities of implementing technology into my practice.

- # Reflection on overall ETEC565 experience

Digital Age Teaching Professionals

This title means a lot to me. As an educator in the 21st century, I believe that it is my responsibility to promote and model digital etiquette and responsible social interactions related to the use of technology and information. Also, one of the competencies in the NETS document that I listed as a personal goal was: *To develop technology-enriched learning environments that enable all students to become active participants in setting their own educational goals, and assessing their own progress.* This goal addresses my main reasons for really focusing on incorporating technology into my teaching – as an educator in the Digital Age.

Site Assessment (Quiz) reflection

The Moodle quiz is an invaluable self-assessment tool for my students to gauge their mastery of the concepts, at the level and thoroughness of a typical summative assessment that meets the BC Ministry of Education curriculum requirements for Chemistry 12. This online quiz will give them real experience with questions that ask them to think, covering knowledge, understanding and application, and higher mental processes. Gibbs and Simpson (2005) suggest that "tackling the assessed task engages students in productive learning activity of an appropriate kind." (p. 15)

Throughout my quiz, the "feedback is received by students while it still matters to them and in time for them to pay attention to further learning or receive further assistance" (Gibbs and Simpson, 2005, p. 18). I have always told my students not to pat themselves on the back when they choose an answer correctly, but be able to tell themselves, definitively, why the other answers are wrong. Therefore, I placed specific emphasis on inputting meaningful feedback for each and every correct response and incorrect response. In order for students to effectively self-assess, I wanted to provide an activity that went beyond providing the multiple choice answer key, but rather providing feedback on all answers, whether correct or incorrect, in order for the students to really engage in the content and think about the concepts.

Digital Story

I learned a lot about teaching and learning in this activity. Introducing the students to a different presentation style (in this case a narrative, story-telling approach) allows students to review material and re-present information in a different way. This is not currently a common approach in my Chemistry classes. I chose a topic that would typically be presented using lecture-style teaching and I think this allowed me to learn a lot about how I can change my instructional strategies to effect meaningful learning in my classes. This is just another example of how I can incorporate DLOs into my instructional strategies.

The functionality of the Prezi was great for my purpose. I could have kept on editing and changing the layout, changing the images, and even changing the story. Another functionality that really appeals to me is the never-ending editing that can occur in Prezi. I could download my Prezi to my desktop in case I needed to present while offline. I think that this is a tool that will endure (for me) in the long run and the presentation will be usable in my practice, whether in its current form, or as future iterations.

The impact that I am hoping for is that by introducing a topic in this way, I can use it as a catalyst for future creations that my students will undertake. They will transfer much more knowledge this way. Student creations can be used in future classes and courses to motivate and inspire the next class of students to create.

A very valuable part of this learning experience was the ability to see how others in the class used various tools to tell their story. Some applications that I had tried and then abandoned, or had skipped over in my decision making, were demonstrated by members of this course to be very unique and impressive story telling tools. I learned a lot by being able to look through the lens of my classmates.

LMS – Moodle Site

The Moodle educational platform that I designed will allow students to collaborate with one another while learning, and provide opportunities to explore the material in any order and as many times as they wish. Part of the delivery system will allow for students to assess their own learning as they collaborate on the website and respond to each other's queries and comments. I truly believe that a blended delivery model will benefit my students and prepare them more fully for lifelong learning.

Moodle affords teachers and learners the ability to create and update course content without aide of programmers or designers, allowing educators to retain control over their educational content while having the openness and freedom to vary instructional delivery (Anderson & Elloumi, 2008).

The first time I had tried Moodle (in a previous course), I had a preponderance of attached files that downloaded. I was surprised how far outside this box I was able to go with my modules. I didn't expect to figure out so many different ways to use the space. I was able to create a Splash page with a Graphical User Interface (GUI). I became a master HTML coding trouble shooter. Well, a proficient beginner, anyway. I think that the creating groups feature will be extremely useful in a secondary school classroom as you could easily form groups of students and *change them up* whenever you liked, for different

tasks. I know that I will tweak, change and add activities and features as this Moodle site evolves, and I look forward to making this a valuable site for enhanced learning. "A combination of both face-to-face and online discussion seems to be most beneficial to students" (Guiller et al., 2008, p. 198).

VISTA Discussion Forums and other activities in ETEC 565 – Constructivism and a Community of Practice –

In the words of Isaac Newton: "If I have seen a little further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants." I think this statement describes well the learning community that existed in our ETEC 565 discussion forums on VISTA. Whether we were responding to each others postings on Case Studies or trouble shooting a Moodle glitch, I felt that we contributed to each others' learning, and helped each other progress in our abilities. Our interactions on VISTA were allowed to play out as we learned from and with each other, with John as mentor, guide and mediator, but not as the 'sage on the stage'. Our questions were always answered or reviewed, while at the same time our minds were not viewed as empty vessels needing to be filled. This is a skill I still need to constantly remind myself of while teaching a traditionally didactic course such as Chemistry.

The **collaborative Wiki** was a great experience as well. I have been asked to utilize a Wiki before, but this was the first time that there was a need to "submit" a final response to a question as a group. This activity opened my eyes and removed perceived limitations of what a Wiki can be used to do. In ETEC 565, I learned *volumes* about how to provide these affordances for meaningful learning activities in my own classroom organization and through varied instructional strategies. This class certainly modeled a valuable learning experience.

• Next Steps in educational technology

In order to be an effective teacher for the remainder of my career, I **must** engage in lifelong learning in terms of educational technology. The technology is evolving continuously, and being in this MET program has opened my eyes to the capabilities of technology for changing my classroom. I have been exposed to a LMS site creation in Moodle, and that application (or the use of any suitable LMS) is sure to take root and continue to evolve in my practice. Online webinar applications such as Elluminate and Wimba will also go to the forefront of my list of applications to become more familiar and more proficient with. I have used both, but I can see that I could use applications such as these much more effectively.

Weblogs are also going to evolve in my practice. Currently the site hosted by my school board does not allow me the affordances of the Blog sites that we are encouraged to use throughout our MET courses. I will take my classroom blogging to another level and go beyond the Homework and Solutions pages that my school district's sites typically host. I have learned that I am capable of utilizing, developing and editing multimedia and digital authoring tools. This will take a time commitment, but it has come to be an interest of mine that I may not have discovered, if not given the incentive in MET. An example of this

opportunity for digital authoring was our Digital Story assignment in this course. The Sky is the limit, if I can create my own resources.

I am also fascinated with, and inspired by, the philosophy of open collaboration and sharing in organizations such as the Creative Commons, as well as with respect to the sharing of educational resources amongst teachers online. I would like to increase my online presence in terms of taking part in (contributing to) this online collaboration with other educators. In this course, I have been given an arsenal of tools to create and share valuable resources for the "greater good" of all students.

Most importantly, I have taken away the tools to learn how to effectively assess technology and its value for different applications. The NETS (2008) document for teachers was a valuable resource for ascertaining my focus for implementation of technology in my classrooms. I also connected with much of what Chickering and Gamson 1987 and 1996) propose in their Seven Principles, especially in terms of using Technology. And of course the Bates and Poole (2003) Framework has proved invaluable time and time again for assessing the effectiveness of technology applications for specific contexts. I will refer to these documents in my practice and remind myself to use these frameworks and guidelines to better analyze the appropriateness of any technology that I plan to incorporate into my practice.

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