Assignment 3: Content Module for Online Course

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ETEC 565A: 66B

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This assignment was a great learning experience for me as it brought back memories of my undergraduate business degree. Since the Introduction to Business Management course I have designed is broken into weekly modules, I decided to use one of these weeks as my content module. As I looked through the different weekly topics, I decided to go with one of my favorite business topics, Marketing Processes. Although I am working through this assignment for the ETEC 565 course, I am also using it as part of a proposal for an online introduction to business course at a university in Atlantic Canada. With this in mind, I did base a lot of the content module around a Pearson textbook and accompanying resources that are already being used in the face to face course. However, to expand my horizons within this course, I did explore open access alternatives and will detail this exploration in this report. Within this document, I will review my creative decisions for the content module and what research influenced this design. As was the case with the design of the introductory module, I continued to follow the model by L.D. Fink (2003), “Self-Directed Guide to Designing Courses for Significant Learning” as the basis for my design of the content module. In the introductory module assignment, I closely followed the “backward design” (Fink, 2003, p. 5) process starting with learning goals and then moving to feedback and assessment. I finished up with the teaching and learning activities and ensured everything was integrated together. For the content module assignment, I still followed the backward design process, however since the overall structure was already in place, I was focusing mainly on the content within each activity or assessment.

As outlined by Fink (2003), I again started the design of the content module with the situational factors influencing the course. The situational factors affecting the course are that it will have over 200 students in each section and for the most part, this will be the student’s first term in university. Also, almost all of the students will be taking their first online course and will have little previous experience in business studies before starting in the course. These factors influenced a number of the content module design decisions. First of all with this many students, the time to grade activities had to be a major consideration when designing the assessments. This was one of the main reasons behind the choice of an automatically graded multiple choice quiz within the module. The fact that this would be many students first term at university and that they would almost all be full time students influenced the amount of reading/coursework expected from them each week. Finally, since the Business Department at the institution views this course as a way to promote themselves to first year students, I tried to add components that would engage students at a deeper level, including the simulation and discussion forum.

Coming back to the backward design, I first outlined the learning goals for the chapter by creating an overview presentation that reviewed each of the learning objectives for the week. Since I was already planning to have the students read a chapter from the *Business Essentials* textbook, I decided to deliver the learning objectives in a more dynamic way. Rather than use a static, written presentation, or basic PowerPoints, I decided to deliver these objectives using Emaze. Using this program, I was able to create a living presentation, including audio to help the student better understand the material being presented. The presentation can be set to auto-play or students can use the arrow buttons to move from slide to slide at their own pace. As outlined by Chickering (1996), this presentation allows the students to review the content through different learning styles.

The next step in the design process was to set up the feedback and assessment tools. For the content modules, I chose two forms of assessment, a weekly quiz and a discussion forum where students would be graded based on their posts and replies to other students. I chose to create a multiple choice quiz as it could provide the students with frequent and immediate feedback (Fink 2003), (Gibbs, G., & Simpson, C., 2005). With these quizzes, students will be able to know how they are doing immediately after submitting the quiz, as I have set up the feedback to show which questions they got incorrect. After reviewing their incorrect answers students have the opportunity to attempt the quiz for a second time. Since the quiz questions will be directly related to the reading and simulation, this also ensures that the assessment matches up closely with the learning objectives for the week (Roblyer, 2015). The quiz questions were designed to incorporate three levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy learning objectives. These questions include knowledge, comprehension, and analysis, with application being used later in the discussion forums. As outlined, the second assessment tool for the week is a discussion forum, where students will be broken into groups of 10 to make it reasonable to review the other posts. (Note: With no students currently in the Moodle course, I have left the group feature turned off for the purposes of this assignment). The goal of the discussion forum was to incorporate “forward-looking assessment” (Fink, 2003, p. 13). Within the discussion forum students will be able to expand on what they learned in the weekly readings and the simulations. Ideally, this will enable the students to use this learned knowledge after the course is over (Fink, 2003). In this week’s module, students are asked to relate their most recent dining experience to the four P’s in the marketing mix. This type of questioning and discussion should bring the content to life for the students, so they can relate to it outside of the course. Finally, by having the students read each other’s posts and post a reply, it should increase the student to student interaction and develop a better sense of community in the course. (Anderson, 2008). The student posts will be reviewed each week and graded based on the following criteria:

1. Demonstrate understanding of week's topic
2. Ability to answer the specific question posed to the group that week
3. Ability to pose additional questions to other students in their group
4. The quality of their replies to another student's posts

Each week students will be asked to reflect on their discussion forum contribution and make some notes. At the end of the term, they will submit a written summary of their discussion forum contributions throughout the course.

After setting up the feedback and assessment components, it was time to finalize the teaching and learning activities. The teaching and learning activities I chose for this model included reading a chapter from the *Business Essentials* textbook, watching the learning objectives presentation through Emaze, and working through the product development simulation. As I developed these different teaching tools, I looked to include activities from all three of the active learning components outlined by Fink (2003). The textbook reading falls under the “information and ideas” (Fink, 2003, p. 17) component, with the simulation and Emaze presentation in “experience” (Fink, 2003, p. 17). Finally, the “reflective dialogue” component will be covered by having the students answer the reflective questions through the discussion forum and submit their discussion forum reflective assignment. As I mentioned above, the *Business Essentials* textbook was a logical selection for the real life application of this assignment. However, I did explore what open access options might be out there when selecting content and resources for an introduction to business course at the university level. The first place I looked was the BC Campus and the Open Textbook Project, however it did not produce much in the way of results. Unfortunately, there is not a book listed for an introduction to business/commerce course, so I decided to see if I could choose chapters from other business books to fit the weekly topics. When I reviewed the two Marketing books to see if there was content relevant for this week’s topic, I found that one had not been updated since 2000, so that was not an option. The second book, Principles of Marketing by Jeff Tanner, did have content applicable to the learning objectives for this week’s module. However, it would require a lot of work by the instructor to pull out the relevant content as this is a full book and only one week’s worth of material would be required. While on the BC Campus site, I did see a link to another open access database called the Open Textbook Library, which is hosted by the University of Minnesota. Within this site, I found a suitable textbook called Exploring Business by Karen Collins of Lehigh University. Although this book is not Canadian, it does cover all the main topics and has an interesting case study integrated throughout the book. I believe the Nike case study would be something students could relate to and would be a creative way to apply the content throughout the term. One downside is the lack of any online resources or simulations that are available with the *Business Essentials* textbook. I was able to find some comparable business simulations online, but most come at a cost that would have to be passed onto the students. In the end, I believe that an instructor could probably come close to offering a similar learning experience for the students for free, by incorporating content from different locations. However, it would take a lot of work to ensure that all the course components integrate well together and that the learning curve is not too much for these busy, first year students to handle.

Once I had completed the assessment and teaching and learning activities, I needed to ensure that all the course components were still integrating properly. It was at this point in time where I needed to make some changes from the work I completed in Assignment 2, the introductory module. At that time, I had outlined a very restrictive weekly schedule where students had to complete readings, quizzes, the simulation, and discussion post all by specific times throughout the week. My line of thinking was based on the situational factors I outlined in the beginning where this would be the first term at university for most of these students. With this in mind, I wanted to go with a highly structured weekly plan. However, after some feedback from Tatiana Bourlova, I was reminded of one of the key benefits of an online course in that it can offer a flexible working schedule for the students. To accomplish both goals, I still required students to complete each of the activities before the end of the week on Sunday night, but allowed them the freedom to complete the work on their own schedule throughout the week.

As I set up the content for this course, I really struggled with the amount of resources and activities the students must complete on a weekly basis. Was I asking too much of the students, too little? I considered having a journal article or case study, but thought that would be too much on top of everything else being delivered during the week. A possible alternative could be to have a simulation for some weeks and a case study for others, as this might offer different learning experiences throughout the term. I am sure these are the type of questions that instructors deal with all the time when developing an online course.

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