



The benefits and challenges of digitalising academic support for online students and students online: a review of technological tools

Key Words

Digitalising Practice, Moodle, Adobe Connect, Technologies

Abstract

The need to provide academic support to students studying fully online have been receiving increased attention. This papers provides two different strategies to provide academic support to online students. The first outlines how tools such as Collaborate and Adobe Connect could be used as a synchronous 'virtual office' to provide academic support to online students. The second outlines how asynchronous online curricula in Microsoft PowerPoint can be easily made interactive using a plug-in called Office Mix. A meta-analysis from Davies, Morriss, and Glazebrook (2014) regarding computer delivered online interventions highlighted that there were improved student outcomes and greater amount of help seeking behaviours when students were given the opportunity to seek help online compared to other support seeking mediums. The outcome of this paper is to highlight the personal challenges and benefits from the adoption of Adobe Connect and Office Mix to support fully online students from two different perspectives; the academic adviser and the educational technologist. Most synchronous applications like Skype and Adobe Connect are predominantly used in online environments to mimic a virtual classroom, but rarely used to provide learning assistance either with faculty members or with learning advisers. The ability to offer academic support through the online meeting maker portal offers a simple, yet effective solution in achieving this institutional and national challenge regarding the provision of online students. The paper draws from a broad critical ethnographic methodology that sees the researchers as both the objective observer and the subjective participant's inseparable from one another in an effort to incorporate a broader reflexive inquiry. In doing so, it utilises Davies, Bagozzi & Warshaw (1986) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in an effort to offer practitioners insight to what was perceived to be the most useful and the easiest to use type of online academic support when faced with multiple technology products. The findings of the paper also present some of the challenges that academics faced when introduced to these technologies and some of their concerns in digitalising their practice.

References

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