Under the Microscope:

Examining Faculty Professional Development for E-Learning

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Abstract: This paper addresses the professional development resources and options for higher education faculty when they need instructional strategies which integrate technology into core subject areas where assessment data for accreditation must be collected. Implementation examples and issues to be addressed include: communication with students and administrators, accreditation requirements for multiple agencies, and how the data from evidence changes classroom technology usage.

What Will Be Shown

Successful professional development workshops for higher education faculty involve them in the planning process and address their issues for curricular integration of technology. When everyone understands accreditation requirements and standards of performance for the use of technology based instructional strategies, it seems an ideal world (NCATE, 2006). However, the assumptions college and university faculty make about the alignment of their technology strategies with their objectives can have a large impact on student outcomes.

While faculty learn the accreditation requirements of their discipline, alignment of course objectives with these standards, and the technology strategies that can pave the way or become barriers to attaining the learning objectives may be neglected (Getz, 2006). Students may have developed a certain comfort level with technology integrated into instruction, yet faculty are hesitant to deploy it in their course assessment process. What professional development resources do they need to make their strategies align with their objectives and ultimately provide the data that accreditation assessments require?

Faculty at Hampton University (Davis et. al., 2005) have explored how web based assessment systems can assist in this process at the student level and at the course level (Barry, K., Laughner, T. & Walvoord, B., 2000). How many data points are really necessary? Do faculty need professional development opportunities to create continuous improvement action plans (Gillan, & McFerrin,2000) that ensure their strategies remain up to date and take into account new technology innovations?

How Professional Development Resources Change the Context for Higher Education Faculty

This paper will show samples of professional development resources that keep technology based instructional strategies central to the alignment and assessment process, increasing the likelihood of attaining better student outcomes. These include Taskstream, Folio, and Chalk & Wire products.

The Major Issues

Three major issues are addressed in this paper: awareness of technology integration strategies which address common assignment goals; understanding what the data says about the difference technology integration makes in teaching, assessing, and intervention and communicating this to students and administrators; and knowledge transfer from one type of assessment need to another across courses, programs, and units.
References


