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Online Learning Reflection

Although I learned a lot from completing prior projects for this class, I must say that this particular group project was the most enjoyable. Having completed this project, those of us who are not yet teachers were given a first rate, hands-on experience of what it is truly like to be one, especially in terms of teaching online. The grading of student discussions, as well as the task of creating discussion topics, showed me just how time-consuming it can be for teachers to create learning content. I have also learned that to teach effectively, one must plan way ahead of time.

Working on this project as a group was a wonderful experience for me. Each member played a big part in the success of this project. I have completed group projects with other students when working on my bachelor's degree and it never failed that either one member of the group lacked in participation and/or one would try to take over. That was not the case concerning this project. Everyone shared their ideas for this project effectively and with respect to the opinions of others in the group. Every part of this project was agreed upon by the group as a whole. Mari created the Google site with all the appropriate pages, Chris created the rubric, Pam created the introduction, and I created the score sheet. Using Google Docs to create the score sheet made it possible for each of us to easily insert the student scores for each of our discussions.

The topics of our group's discussions centered on online learning. Online learning, sometimes referred to as e-learning, is defined as "education via the Internet, network, or standalone computer. E-learning is essentially the network-enabled transfer of skills and knowledge. E-learning refers to using electronic applications and processes to learn. E-learning applications and processes include Web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual classrooms and digital collaboration. Content is delivered via the Internet, intranet/extranet, audio or video tape, satellite TV, and CD-ROM." (*What is e-learning?*)

My discussion topic concentrated on online technology tools for teachers. The purpose of this particular discussion topic was to enable students to share available resources with each other in hopes that each would find something new that they could utilize in their own classrooms. There are many free online tools available for teachers, which include everything from WEB 2.0 applications for productivity and collaboration to digital libraries. The problem is that many teachers don't know about the wealth of resources available to them.

According to (*Smirnova, 2008*), "Many educators would agree that a vital indicator of student success is students' ability to develop both skills and an interest for lifelong learning. If this is the objective, however, then it follows that the modes of teaching we employ and the overall educational experience and environment we offer should reinforce these skills."

Online technology tools provide teachers with new ways to engage students in a meaningful way. "Children raised on new media technologies are less patient with filling out worksheets and listening to lectures" (Collins, 2009) because students already participate on a global level. Technology promotes participation in traditional classrooms. Traditional classroom assignments that require students to complete worksheets and so on are not as engaging as those that incorporate technology, and when they are completed, they are just that, finished. However, incorporating technology tools into assignments will show students that education is a constantly evolving entity. Whether it is participating in a class discussion, working collaboratively on a presentation, utilizing online games that make learning a concept fun, and so on, the technologies available to teachers and students online, and in many cases free, will increase the amount students participate.

Bibliography

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