

Rethinking Course Infrastructure and Instructional Strategies to Support Learning Online

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Abstract: This paper describes and discusses the experiences of students enrolled in Instructional Technology graduate education courses, from a higher education institution in southern United States, that were delivered with online components. Data was collected on instructional (online assignments and activities) and non-instructional (contextual issues) factors, as well as data on student perceptions of their online experiences. After data analysis, the study identified perceptions and elements that could help in rethinking the course infrastructure and redesigning instructional strategies to facilitate positive and productive online learning experiences. The paper recommends ways of improving online courses and for developing supportive course infrastructures and instructional strategies for online students and instructors.

Introduction

This paper will describe and discuss students' experiences in two sections of a graduate education course, from a university located in southern United States, that were delivered in online formats. Thirty-five students, predominantly females with two male students, completed the course. Students developed new knowledge and skills by completing several assignments and activities that promote critical thinking (Kolloff, Kolloff, & Jones, (2009), group collaboration (Davies, Ramsay, Lindfield, & Couperthwaite, 2005), and problem solving (McLinden, McCall, Hinton, & Weston, 2006; Lapointe & Reisetter, 2008). Data was collected on instructional (online activities) and non-instructional (contextual issues, learner characteristics) factors, as well as data on student perceptions of their online experiences. After data analysis, the study was able to identify factors that can be applied to improve instructional quality and to facilitate positive and productive student experiences. The paper will conclude with recommendations for developing supportive course infrastructures and instructional strategies for online students and instructors.

Research Questions

This paper will identify, describe and discuss how course infrastructure and instructional strategies support or hinder the successful design and delivery of online learning experiences of graduate education students. The following research questions were investigated:

- How did graduate education students perceive their online learning experiences?
- What aspects of course infrastructure enhanced the online learning experience?
- What elements contributed positively or negatively to the online learning experience?
- What instructional strategies used supported the online learning experience?

Thank you for reviewing one of my publications.

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