

Assignment# 3: Proposal
Lifelong Learning Portal for Adult Learners in Lax Kw'alaams
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Introduction

Adult learners in Lax Kw'alaams face a number of competing life priorities that impede the realization of lifelong learning. The one classroom - one subject - one teacher - one student paradigm contributes to learning being disjointed and ineffective because Aboriginal learners in remote First Nations communities need to take stop-outs and returns depending on their constantly changing life circumstances.

To begin the dialogue about improvements and enhancements to the College and Career Preparation Program in the First Nations community of Lax Kw'alaams, I am proposing the development of a lifelong learning portal. This proposal will recommend a plan to improve student access to information in a timely manner, improve communications between students, the instructor, College staff and management, and the Band's Education Coordinator and Education Committee members. There needs to be ready access to learning supports within remote communities comparable to those supports in place for off-site students. I propose to combine the strengths of traditional face-to-face instruction with the use of Information and Communication Technologies. ✓ *oic*

Learner Characteristics

There are currently twenty-five ^{adult?} students registered in Math, English and Computer Studies courses. There are currently five Band-sponsored learners.

↳ in Lax Kw'alaams?

These ^{OK -} adult learners live within a remote First Nations community in Northwest BC. ^{OK -} They range in ages from eighteen to fifty-five years old. Two-thirds have a grade ten education or less, and several have been out of the traditional school system for twenty years or longer. Some of the learners have endured the abuses of the residential schools. These learners take their responsibilities to their community and their families quite seriously, participating in feasts, funerals, food-gathering within the local community as well as within the larger community they are a part of. They also take their clan and crest affiliations seriously, and put these commitments above personal gains derived from schooling. Sensitive to the legacy of the externally imposed residential school system, the facilitator's approach is inclusive, respectful, and non-coercive. The program began in early March, and has been moved several times to new locations. There have been challenges with obtaining the needed resources to deliver the program. There is a growing cautious optimism that the college upgrading program will be sustainable and not be interrupted, as many such programs have in the past. The majority of these learners have started upgrading but did not complete several times in the past.

Socio-economic conditions

Socio-economic conditions pose significant barriers to student participation in the college preparation program. Barriers to embracing lifelong learning for learners in this remote community include the perception that distance education is

Some educators
get around this
problem by using
a different
label (e.g.
e-learning).

equivalent to correspondence study, and as such is ineffective and a second-rate option compared to face-to-face delivery (McCullen & Rohrbach, 2003). Only through allowing flexibility with attendance and completion dates is it possible to effectively support students who have family, cultural and community responsibilities (McCullen & Rohrbach, 2003). Students on Social Assistance are given subsistence income, and the chance to supplement it is taken advantage of whenever any employment is available to earn wages for their families and relieve the burden of poverty. There are seasonal fluctuations that lead students to decide to forego schooling and join their families on expeditions to nearby ancestral sites for harvesting of traditional Aboriginal foods to sustain them through the winter months. The lifelong learning portal can provide some degree of continuity for those learners who have accessibility to a computer with Internet, and provide an alternative to those whose family obligations pose significant challenges to participating and attending regularly.

and is there
good access
to these students?
(with speed Internet
is still a problem
in many remote
areas)

(+ support)
- Is motivation an issue too?

Addressing the Challenges

One crucial goal for the Lifelong Learning Portal is to facilitate communications between the Band Education Committee, the Education Coordinator, the students, the instructor, and the College management. To reduce student isolation, initiatives to link students to their instructor and institution staff need to be introduced to foster relationship-building. Students sometimes have insufficient knowledge of and a lack of skills to cope with the requirements of independent

study. - Is a "textual" environment an issue as well?

To bolster the likelihood of learner persistence and increase learner completion rates, the following student support services need to be incorporated in to the content of the Lifelong Learning Portal: orientation and information, advising and counseling, admissions and registration, instructional support, study skills, social interaction with peers and student advocacy (Moore & Kearsley, 2005). Michael Hough (1984) identified some features which can encourage independence in learners: a supportive environment, clarity of expectations, use of extensive feedback, self-paced learning.

Is info. in the portal the only support service? Is

The portal would have support materials for the Career and College preparation courses offered by the College. These would ^{be} partially online courses, to supplement and support F2F on-site instruction. ^{OK} Computer Studies (CPST), ^{sufficient} Education and Career Planning (EDCP), English (ENG) and Mathematics, (MTH), eventually followed by other courses such as First Nations Studies and Science courses. Self-paced instruction has been offered by the College as a delivery option for students enrolled in the Career and College preparation (CCP) program. It needs to be emphasized that the on-site instructor continues to be the most crucial piece of the delivery method ^{yes!} (McCullen & Rohrbach, 2003).

"What does appear to work for Aboriginal learners is to emphasize face-to-face contact with instructors, tutors, counselors, supervisors, mentors, or other students, and to supplement these contacts with self-study print materials"

(McCullen & Rohrbach, 2003, pg. 92)

The portal would only enhance the interaction and reduce the isolation between learners and their instructor. ^{OK} The support materials aim to streamline the processes of (pre)assessment, orientation, intake and progress tracking, textbooks, and student financing options. A clearer assessment at intake of learners' level of readiness for self-direction, their academic and career goals, their level of academic preparedness, and their past level of education achieved, can assist learners identify potential challenges (McCullen & Rohrbach, 2003).

The portal would serve to prepare current and future CCP learners to become more comfortable using web-based technologies, with resources and assignments integrated into supervised/self-paced Face-to-Face instruction. The use of Information and Communications Technologies and constructivist teaching principles can prepare learners for not only using technologies, but for also participating confidently in different delivery formats, as well as participating effectively using different strategies such as collaborative learning, learning partnerships and Self-Directed Learning. The blended delivery format prepares learners to learn using a number of various formats, thus playing a feeding role into the online courses. Web-based materials need to encourage and support people at different stages of self-directedness, yet also provide support required by people at different stages of self-directedness (Moore & Kearsley, 2005).

The Development Process

The on-site facilitator will initially select support materials from a review of online support materials available from the College Intranet, and request feedback from Sub-Committee Chairs for additional resources. Due to the limited Internet connection speed in the village (dial-up connectivity ✓ accessible to most homes), and no Internet connection within the classroom, resources would be copied from the instructor's home site on to a number of external drives for easy storage and mobility between the field centre, the instructor's home site, and the college campus in another town. The resources would be loaded and installed onto the client computers in the classrooms on an as-needed basis. Over the first semester, in consultation with the Band's Education Coordinator, and the Band's Education Committee members, the instructor will review a number of promising educational software packages to support learning. The web site would be field-tested as a pilot for the first semester.

Potential Funding Sources

There are two main sources ✓ for funding for the project. The Aboriginal Special Project Fund (AVED) will assist with the development and pilot of the Adult Basic Education (ABE) courses offered in partnership with Northwest Community College, as well as provide funding to support student recruitment activities and student support services. The Indian Studies Support Program

(ISSP) provides funding to promote access to quality First Nations Post-Secondary learning programs for First Nations learners. With these two funding sources, in combination with in-kind contributions of equipment, along with donations from private and corporate sources, the program would meet most of its funding requirements. Additional funds can also be applied for through the Band Council to discuss and pass a Band Council Resolution (BCR) to cover unforeseen additional expenses.

The Support/Delivery System

The support/delivery system will be designed by a team, including the on-site Coordinator, the campus IT support technician, the Chair of the Computer Studies Sub-Committee, and the College Chair for the Ed Tech Committee. There will be major technical limitations to overcome: limited Internet connectivity between the instructor's home site and the main college campus, and no internet connection available in the classroom itself. Moodle, a free, Open-Source Course Management System (CMS) would be chosen for the platform for collaboration. It is scalable for either a small group of a couple dozen users, or for thousands of users. It can be easily set up on a Linux-based web server using Apache, which could be set up at the instructor's home-site within the remote community. Moodle also supports the use of Real Simple Syndication (RSS) news feeds. Some elements of the curricula for these courses require Internet activities during class time. The web pages would be stored on CDs and simulate a browsing session using a web browser but would be offline under strictly controlled conditions.

but requires
substantial
tech support
to run.

That
person
needs
good
tech
knowledge.

ok.

Feedback and Evaluation

There will be a form in the site to facilitate students' feedback. Also, an analysis of the web activity log files, visitor click-paths, as well as start pages and end pages, can provide vital data to help tweak the site design. At the mid-point and end of each semester, a brief student survey will be sent out to participating students to elicit feedback. Questions will request feedback on possibilities for improvements, and will cover student perceptions of the success of the self-directed learning course, the web portal's effectiveness and usefulness to them as learners. There will also be interviews with students during the course of the semester to identify any concerns students might have when working online with the lifelong learning portal. The instructor would send off a student questionnaire at mid-semester and at the end of the semester for student feedback. The instructor would also compile a semester-end summary of the student evaluations, as well as a web activity summary for the Band Education Committee and College management.

what about formative & summative program evaluation as described by muller & keansley?

Conclusion

The aim of the lifelong learning portal is to contribute to the creation of a "...supportive community that develops students' self-confidence, nurtures the development of a cohesive group of peers and provides a vehicle for solving problems" (Lang & Scarfe, 1989, pg.105).

Through the use of the resources and tools of the lifelong learning portal, students' autonomy would improve, contributing to feelings of comfort and confidence to work under different learning conditions. It would help learners become more proficient in using Information and Communications Technologies for co-creating knowledge with others. It would stimulate the growth of a community of learners. It would also aid learners to become more comfortable to better manage the shifting priorities of school, work, family, and community and individual commitments.

References:

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Case for Moodle. Retrieved December 8, 2006, from http://docs.moodle.org/en/Case_for_Moodle

Glenn B.

	A+	A	A-	B+	B
Who are your students? How many of them are there?	✓				
What is the nature of the curricula (i.e., in general terms, what is the subject matter and/or what skills/competencies are being promoted)?	✓				
How and by whom will courses be planned and produced or acquired?	✓				
How and from whom will funding be obtained/provided? Demonstrate some 'sensitivity' to and understanding of cost issues.	✓				
How and by whom will the support/delivery system be implemented? Indicate what technological platform is proposed and demonstrate some 'sensitivity' to <u>epistemological</u> issues (as per Unit 3).	✓				
How and when will evaluation and revision of course, programs and procedures take place?		✓			
Literature citations		✓			
APA style	✓				
Page length	✓				

Comments: Glenn - interesting idea - to use a portal for a lifelong l'ry. I'm not ~~convinced~~ convinced, tho, that downloading the web pages to a CD is a great alternative. Also, while Aboriginal l'ry is not my expertise - ~~isn't~~ isn't it most

Aboriginal communities based on an oral culture?

So, I guess I wondered, why a portal instead of iSee, iVisualize/iVocalize - or even Skype (which is free). Nevertheless, well done. (A+) Final grade (A+)

