Do New Designs make Better Learning Experience? – A Collaborative Evaluation on Nursing Students' Online Learning Experience with QM-Based Courses

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Abstract

The College of Nursing (CON) in a university in the southeast of the United States has developed online nursing courses based on the Quality Matters (QM) Framework for the Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing Major (RN to BS) program. QM is an international, non-profit organization that has become a leader in quality online course design for all of higher education (Gaston and Lynch, 2018).

The RN to BS program is a fully online program that allows practicing nurses the opportunity to build a degree based on the nurse's career needs. The RN to BS program provides a high-quality online education for nurses to advance their practice with clinical areas, nursing management, and beyond. Considering the new features in those online nursing courses, the CON requested an external evaluator to assess students' learning experience in those online courses. The Model of Collaborative Evaluation (MCE) is applied to this project due to the standards of working with the stakeholders to determine how the results are applied to the program in real-time. This project will evaluate 1) student's individual learning experience in the online nursing program; 2) students' collaborative learning experience (for example: learning in groups, learning for course projects, etc.) in the online nursing program.

CON online courses and QM Framework

Quality Matters (QM) is an international, non-profit organization that has become a leader in quality online course design for all of higher education (Gaston and Lynch, 2018). In the past, online nursing courses are designed by individual faculty members, who draw from their professional training, who most likely did not include formal educational instruction on how to deliver courses in the online learning environment.

The QM-based online courses in this project were designed by a professional instructional design group in CON. All those courses have a consistent course template, outlines, content format, presentation format, and activity format. The consistency of the course design brings convenience for both faculties and students to navigate those online courses.

All the QM-based online courses were designed in the Canvas LMS and have been delivered for at least one semester online. Currently, the CON tracks the students' learning experience based on the learning outcomes at the end of the courses that were calculated automatically by Canvas LMS, as well as the End-of-Semester Survey. However, the CON was concerned that current categories that were used to track students' learning experience were not providing the depth of understanding of students learning experience. The current End-Of-Semester Survey only provides limited room for students to elaborate on their online learning experience. The CON requested an external evaluator to assess students' learning experience in the online courses to get a better understanding of how the QM-based courses influence their learning.

Evaluation Questions:

1. In what ways do nursing students perceive their learning experience in the online nursing program?

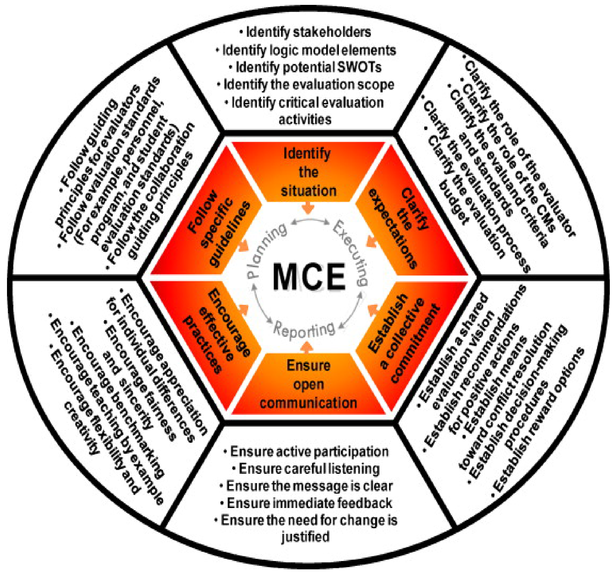
a. How do the nursing students feel about their individual learning experience in the online nursing program?

b. Comparing to the face-to-face nursing program, what challenges the nursing students meet in this online nursing program?

c. How do the online nursing program need to be improved in order to make nursing students feel more engaged in this program?

2. What are the suggestions the nursing students want to share in order to improve their learning experience in this online nursing program?

The Model of Collaborative Evaluation (MCE)



Quality Matters (QM) Rubrics

HE Specific Review Standards from the QM Higher Education Rubric, Sixth Edition

General Standards	Specific Review Standards	Points
Course Overview and Introduction	1.1 Instructions make clear how to get started and where to find various course components.	3
	1.2 Learners are introduced to the purpose and structure of the course.	3
	1.3 Communication expectations for online discussions, email, and other forms of interaction are clearly stated.	2
	1.4 Course and institutional policies with which the learner is expected to comply are clearly stated within the course, or a link to current policies is provided.	2
	1.5 Minimum technology requirements for the course are clearly stated, and information on how to obtain the technologies is provided.	2
	1.6 Computer skills and digital information literacy skills expected of the learner are clearly stated.	1
	1.7 Expectations for prerequisite knowledge in the discipline and/or any required competencies are clearly stated.	1
	1.8 The self-introduction by the instructor is professional and is available online.	1
	1.9 Learners are asked to introduce themselves to the class.	1
Learning Objectives (Competencies)	2.1 The course learning objectives, or course/program competencies, describe outcomes that are measurable.	3
	2.2 The module/unit-level learning objectives or competencies describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives or competencies.	3
	2.3 Learning objectives or competencies are stated clearly, are written from the learner's perspective, and are prominently located in the course.	3
	2.4 The relationship between learning objectives or competencies and learning activities is clearly stated.	3
	2.5 The learning objectives or competencies are suited to the level of the course.	3
Assessment and Measurement	3.1 The assessments measure the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.	3
	3.2 The course grading policy is stated clearly at the beginning of the course.	3
	3.3 Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of learners' work, and their connection to the course grading policy is clearly explained.	3
	3.4 The assessments used are sequenced, varied, and suited to the level of the course.	2
	3.5 The course provides learners with multiple opportunities to track their learning progress with timely feedback.	2
Instructional Materials	4.1 The instructional materials contribute to the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.	3
	4.2 The relationship between the use of instructional materials in the course and completing learning activities is clearly explained.	3
	4.3 The course models the academic integrity expected of learners by providing both source references and permissions for use of instructional materials.	2
	4.4 The instructional materials represent up-to-date theory and practice in the discipline.	2
	4.5 A variety of instructional materials is used in the course.	2
Learning Activities and Learner Interaction	5.1 The learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.	3
	5.2 Learning activities provide opportunities for interaction that support active learning.	3
	5.3 The instructor's plan for interacting with learners during the course is clearly stated.	3
	5.4 The requirements for learner interaction are clearly stated.	2
Course Technology	6.1 The tools used in the course support the learning objectives or competencies.	3
	6.2 Course tools promote learner engagement and active learning.	3
	6.3 A variety of technology is used in the course.	1
	6.4 The course provides learners with information on protecting their data and privacy.	1
Learner Support	7.1 The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered and how to obtain it.	3
	7.2 Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's accessibility policies and services.	3
	7.3 Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's academic support services and resources that can help learners succeed in the course.	3
	7.4 Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's student services and resources that can help learners succeed.	1
Accessibility* and Usability	8.1 Course navigation facilitates ease of use.	3
	8.2 The course design facilitates readability.	3
	8.3 The course provides accessible text and images in files, documents, LMS pages, and web pages to meet the needs of diverse learners.	3
	8.4 The course provides alternative means of access to multimedia content in formats that meet the needs of diverse learners.	2
	8.5 Course multimedia facilitate ease of use.	2
	8.6 Vendor accessibility statements are provided for all technologies required in the course.	2

* Meeting QM Specific Review Standards regarding accessibility does not guarantee or imply that the specific accessibility regulations of any country are met. Consult with an accessibility specialist to ensure that accessibility regulations are met.

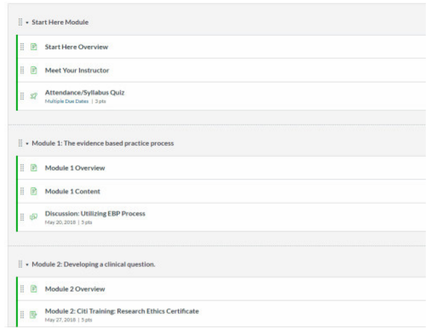
Evaluation Approach

The Model of Collaborative Evaluation (MCE) a well-documented framework for guiding collaborative evaluations in a useful manner (Rodríguez-Campos & Rincones-Gómez, 2013), is ideal for this project due to the standards of working with the stakeholders to determine the scope of the evaluation and to determine how the results are applied to the program in real-time.

The MCE develops an open dialogue between the evaluator and the stakeholders to allow for more meaningful use of the results. The external evaluator will work together with the nursing students in this project. They will review the weekly discussion board, weekly learning experience reflection blog posts (created by each student), end-of-module reflection survey (total 7 surveys in 8-modules, 16 weeks courses), and newly designed End-of-Semester reflection survey.

The purpose of this evaluation is to determine the most efficient way to improve nursing students' online learning experience.

CON Online Course Design in Canvas LMS



Course Survey Questions

Data Collection

The evaluator will use three methods to collect data: a survey questionnaire, semi-structured interview, and bi-weekly diary from online nursing students.

Data Analysis

The first step to analyze the massive amount of data is to organize (Morell, 2015). The evaluator will organize the data both physically and electronically. The evaluator will print out the data collected from each participant and organize the data in a folder for each participant. Also, the evaluator will create an electronic folder for each participant to organize and save the data on a personal computer. The evaluator will use the thematic analysis approach to analysis the narrative descriptions of the semi-structured interviews and students' diaries in the evaluation project. The thematic analysis approach is used to identify and generate the themes in the narrative descriptions after a full set of data (Grbich, 2011). The evaluator will also use a constant comparative analysis approach to analyze the data. The constant comparative analysis is utilized to find the similarities and differences in the narrative description (Coban, 2015). The constant comparative approach and thematic analysis approach will help the evaluator to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the information collected in this evaluation project.

Reference

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