

Assignment 7 Discussion – Navigating the Online Course

Discuss what you consider to be the most critical of the navigation imperatives and describe how this impacts on student learning within the online course environment system.

As a developmental mathematics instructor, I am constantly challenged on how to help my students overcome their math anxieties or negative dispositions toward learning mathematics. Integrating e-learning applications into the instructional model of my courses has been one instructional strategy that I have been using to mitigate the challenges of teaching developmental math students. I have implemented several e-learning applications to provide opportunities for interactive and engaging learning experiences that offer students a myriad of multimedia resources. Though students demonstrated improvement in their academic performances and better disposition toward learning mathematics, I perceived the navigational features of most of these e-learning applications were not enabling students to size up the application as expected (Allen, 2003). However, this perception has changed recently after integrating a new e-learning application (i.e. ALEKS) into the instructional model of my courses. The reason for this change of perception has been how effective this new e-learning application let learners see where they are in the learning experience (Allen, 2003).

Developmental math students tend to be very optimistic of their abilities to do mathematics at the start of an academic term, but unfortunately their optimism fades as the course progresses, so their persistence to complete the course. ALEKS' navigational feature of displaying students' academic performance as a pie chart has been a critical factor to maintain students' initial optimism of doing mathematics and boost their persistence levels to complete the course. ALEKS displays the course topics in slices with different colors, but each color has two different shades. Dark shades represent how much the students know about the course topics and light shades represent how much they need to learn about the topics. Students fill their pie in dark shade colors by selecting and working the topics displayed in each slice. As students demonstrate mastery levels of their selected topics, their pie is filled with dark shade colors. For many of my developmental math students, the ALEKS pie is a meaningful display of information they keenly observe (Allen, 2003), much more than their grades posted regularly in the LMS gradebook.

The sense of empowerment and euphoria my developmental math students demonstrate publicly when they complete a slice of their pie is a meaningful and memorable experience that I often find hard to duplicate with other instructional strategies or activities. For such reason, I consider Allen's navigation imperative "Let the Learners See Where They Are" (Allen, 2003) as the most critical one when considering e-learning applications for my developmental math courses.

References

Allen, M.W. (2003). *Michael Allen's guide to e-learning: Building interactive, fun, and effective learning programs for any company*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, Inc.