Scenario Analysis

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Chosen Scenario: #1 Lack of Interaction and High Dropout Rate

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Introduction to the Scenario

In an asynchronous online course, few students are participating in discussion boards, and most of those students are completing their assignments with minimal participation in discussion. The instructor does not participate in discussions or visibly engage with the posts. The course materials consist of mostly pre-recorded lecture videos and assignments. The dropout rate for the course has increased and students report feeling disconnected and unsupported.

Engagement Barriers (ULO 2.1)

Barrier 1: Lack of instructor presence harms engagement

- Students are unengaged and are dropping out of the class. Student engagement can be divided into the following three dimensions.
    - Behavioral: active responses, persistence, and participation
    - Cognitive: mental effort and demonstrated understanding in learning activities
    - Affective: Emotional investment in learning indicated by positive interactions with peers, instructors, and the learning environment (Hollister et al., 2022)

Students are completing the assignments, so they do show some behavioral and cognitive engagement. The course is lacking in student-to-student interaction and student-to-instructor interaction, which undermines affective engagement. The role of the instructor in an online setting is to mentor students, provide scaffolding, and promote social and cognitive engagement (Yang et al., 2018). In contrast, the instructor is posting pre-recorded information and does not interact with his students in discussion boards. This course lacks a teaching presence, which fails to encourage students to interact with each other, which results in students feeling disconnected and unsupported.

Barrier 2: Limited connection between discussion board activities, assignments, and course goals

- The learning objectives should tie into all activities and content that make up the course. Students are completing assignments with limited or no interaction with peers. This fact points to a lack of alignment between course goals, content, activities, and assignments. Students are not seeing the value in participating in course activities (which might include useful discussion with peers or interaction with their instructor) and are skipping them. Unfortunately, this results in further isolation and lower motivation, leading to decreased learning and higher dropout rates.

Strategies to Address Each Barrier (CLO 2)

Strategy for Barrier 1: Enhance teaching presence by increasing instructor involvement

- The role of an instructor and the teaching presence is critical to student engagement in an online course. The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework defines the instructor's role in the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes (Yang et al., 2018). The instructor should add content to the course to help it feel personal and guided. Examples include a recorded welcome video, short introduction notes for each lesson explaining the content and learning goals, and meaningful, timely feedback for assignments and discussion posts. This will increase the instructor's visibility in the class and provide the "why" behind the course content. The instructor should hold virtual office hours and participate in discussion boards from the very beginning of class. On the boards, the instructor can demonstrate expected behavior, summarize themes, ask questions, and draw attention to outstanding posts. The instructor's example will encourage students to interact in the discussion boards, which will prevent isolation and disconnectedness. These interactions will build student relationships and develop a sense of community, which will increase motivation and engagement.

Strategy for Barrier 2: **Redesign course with active learning strategies**

- Redesigning this course with active participation instead of just passive content, will ensure that engagement is improved. Pre-recorded video communication has been shown to be an effective and popular tool for online courses with students citing the ability to increase the speed of the lecture video and more time management freedom (Hollister, 2022). However, using a program such as Panopto, to embed

quizzes, reflection prompts, or branching scenarios into the videos will improve student engagement and motivation. These additions can help learners connect the concepts of the lectures to real-world applications, reinforcing the principle that adults are motivated by relevant, practical learning (Instructional Design Australia, 2024).

Discussion boards can be redesigned to include specific prompts that enrich learning and foster critical thinking, such as short case studies or ethical questions. Asking students to post brief video or voiceover reflections about the lectures in the discussion boards allows them to share their expertise and understanding with their peers which can be motivating for adult learners. Yang et al (2018) found that many studies show a positive link between more peer posting and higher levels of positive engagement. This strategy also allows for asynchronous peer-to-peer communication, which increases affective engagement.

Reflection on Application

Scenario Summary

Barrier	Strategy	Example practices
#1 Limited instructor presence and engagement	Enhance teaching presence by increasing instructor involvement	- Add personalized welcome video and intro notes for each lesson explaining content, activities, and goals - Provide meaningful, timely feedback to students - Hold virtual office hours for connection and support - Actively participate in discussion boards
#2 Passive course design	Redesign course with active learning strategies	- Use interactive video tools (like Panopto) to embed quizzes, reflection prompts, or branching scenarios to pre-recorded lectures - Create discussion board prompts that encourage critical thinking - Ask students to post short video or voice reflections to share insights with their peers

Professional Application

- I chose this scenario because most of the online learning I create is in an asynchronous setting. The principles of andragogy are central to the work I do, but it's easy to forget to put learners first when we have little direct contact with them. While we often don't have the luxury of a cohort of students going through our education on a specific schedule, we have data that shows that most learners purchase our education within the first 6 months of launch. We could apply some of these strategies to enhance engagement and peer-to-peer interaction. It would be easy to have the nurse planner (our SME) record a welcome video and include it in the LMS. We do not currently utilize discussion boards for educational modules, but that is something we can look at in the future. We typically hold a webinar to launch new education, but we could also provide an "office hours" webinar to encourage learners to discuss the education they've taken, share how it's changed their practice, and ask questions of the SMEs who contributed the content.

  This exercise has also reminded me that we have tools in our LMS to add interactivity to recorded webinars. I will look for ways to increase the interactivity of these video modules so that they are more engaging.

Conclusion

- Asynchronous courses can be engaging experiences where students feel connected to their peers, their instructor, and the learning environment. This requires careful course design using active learning principles to align activities, content, and assignments with learning goals. Using interactive tools and good communication, instructors can facilitate student interaction and learning and interact with students. Learners that feel supported, connected, and motivated are more likely to be engaged and less likely to drop out.

References

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