#3 – Refine Your SoTL Plan

Plan for a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Project

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Research Questions

What are you curious about?

What would you like to know about strategies that might hinder and/or help students to learn, in your course?

Do you want to know if an activity, assignment, or teaching strategy "works?"

Do you have a question about how to help your students learn a particular skill?

Before the start of the pandemic, our college was delivering courses in 3 different formats.

- Fully online
- Blended (1/2 online and ½ in class)
- Fully in class

Since March 2020, we have seen all of our classes move into a fully online delivery method due to Covid-19. For some of our faculty and students, the move to fully online was seamless; they had been teaching and taking courses in this method for years.

But for many, it was difficult. Students had to become more independent in the way they consumed the course material. They no longer sat in a classroom surrounded by other students that they could ask questions of.

Professors had to look at different ways that they could make the online experience more fulfilling, interesting, and fun.

The advent of different teaching tools (Kahoot, Quiz Me, H5p) allowed for more interactive and interesting ways to present the material to our students.

Faculty now had many more choices to use (not just PowerPoint) to engage students. Some of these tools worked well, but some of them did not work (due to technical issues, cultural, or ease of use).

We are now going into the 3rd year of Virtual Lessons; can we look back and determine if these games and interactive learning tools' been effective in the learning process for our students.

Which ones worked well, and which ones did not?

Identify challenges/outcome related to learning that is related to your question.

Describe the learning in a way that suggests how you might measure it using either qualitative or quantitative methods.

Many students have embraced the move to online learning. They appreciate the less structured approach to learning.

The need for preschedule classes has been replaced with a more relaxed learn-on-your own model.

Students now generally have 1 week to complete course material before moving on to new material.

For some students, the lack of formal in-class education has increased their stress levels. No longer do they have the structure that traditional in-class instruction provided. They now have to become more independent and utilize their time management skills.

The social aspect of in-class face-to-face instruction and the ability to ask questions throughout a lecture, before or after class has been replaced with 1-hour virtual class time slots, and a chat room to ask questions during the lecture.

Most students do not turn on their cameras during these sessions and thus can not be directly related to each other. The other students are just a far-off voice, no longer a face in the classroom.

Cultural and societal norms can also make this type of learning very difficult for some students.

As Professors we must be very aware of how we are presenting the material, provide adequate time for our students to be engaged in the material. Ask the students to make use of the "Ask a question – Hand Up" facility of Zoom/BONGO, to ensure that they can ask questions.

Show them that the hands-up facility is just like a face-to-face classroom, where they would raise their hand to ask questions.

Engage our students to see what is working and how they are enjoying the online activities. The use of informal polls to see if different activities are working, as well as "Open House" sessions where you allocate part of a class each couple of weeks to just talk about the course with an emphasis more on delivery than course material.

Compare test results post and pre-covid to ensure that student achievements are consistent with the new approach. Questions where students have done poorly, could we in the future enhance the learning of these concepts using virtual learning tools (h5p – Crosswords, Quizzes etc.)

Describe the instructional activity, assignment, or teaching strategy that will promote students learning on the outcome you identified.

SoTL project might investigate the impact of a modification to an existing strategy or assignment. Describe how the new approach differs from the old approach and why this modification might change student learnings on this outcome.

Students have utilized many different methods to study for tests and exams. Some of these methods have included study groups, Textbook review, notes taken during in-class lectures and other materials provided by the instructor.

With the move away from in-class (face-to-face) and during a pandemic these approaches before more difficult to utilize. A zoom student group is much different than an in-person student group. Social interaction is not easily achieved.

Professors must provide students with more interactive study tools. The use of tools like Kahoot, H5p games etc. allow for more interactive type learning and review of important exam concepts.

Describe the evidence that would persuade an external audience that the new or modified teaching strategy improves student learning on the targeted learning outcome.

Describe the evidence you would need to collect to answer questions about the impact or value of this teaching strategy.

How would you convince others that this approach is better than other approaches?

What comparisons should you make? Examine students; skills before and after the assignment? Compare students who complete the learning activity to another group of students – what comparisons would be meaningful?

Before Covid—19, the perception was that online learning was less effective than in-call face-to-face learning.

Since Covid-19, some of these perceptions have been altered as Universities and Colleges were required to shift from in-class learning to fully online learning.

While it would be simple to quantitatively compare test results from pre-covid years with covid teaching years, the use of non-quantitative methods is now easier to evaluate with this shift of perception.

Examine the tools that each of the virtual games and material provides, especially around usage. Have the students used the tools consistently? If you find some tools are not used as much as others, or not at all, reach out to your students to enquire why? Was the tool hard to use? Was the technology being used in the tool not compatible with what the student is using? Are the students physically located resulting in the lack of availability or usability of the tools? (i.e., I had a student who worked on an oil rig off the coast of Nigeria and could not use the Respondents lockdown browser because of poor internet speeds. Are students restricted from using certain tools due to country censorship laws? Are students using employer-supplied computers that do not allow them to install additional software without admin rights? Mature students who are coming back to school after many years just don't get the new technology?)

How and where would you publish, present, or disseminate this work?

Initial dissemination of my work would be within the Fanshawe College Community. This would then be expanded a conference and social media collaboration.

Adapted from: C. J. Stanny, E. M. El-Sheikh, & H-M. Chung (2009) Getting Started with a SoTL Project
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