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IDT 610: Distance Education

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Program Evaluation

Group Component Provided the Keys to Success to Completion of Evaluation Project.

In the summer of 2021, I participated in the Instructional Design and Technology course of Program Evaluation. The course aimed to teach leaners the theories, concepts, policies, and procedures for effective evaluation. The course is offered under the Instructional Design and Technology Master's at West Virginia University. The course offered a variety of materials, and learning outcomes designed for learner to build the necessary skills to evaluate programs effectively.

For the theory I applied (or thought most applied to) this course I chose the Community of Inquiry Theory. This theory is almost a shoe in for this course, how it was designed, and how I most completed it.

To start the course was designed with several small assessments throughout the semester, and there was one large, group-based project that was started early in the semester (week two) and concluded the week before the class was over. The basis for the large group project (which is the subject of this paper); with respect to the theory, I have noted as most related or showing emphasis in the course, was an evaluation of a program of my choosing (or my groups choosing as it were). There were three people in my group which decided to evaluate one of the companies that one of our group menders was involved in. It is a West Virginia based company, Coalfield Development provides jobs, and opportunities to those in the Appalachian state! We decided to an evaluation of the Model that is utilized throughout the organization that dictate how those involved in the program, work and learn.

Community of Inquiry Theory was identified as the main concept I felt emphasis most of what this course was about. The theory itself has the three 'presence components: Social, Cognitive, and Teaching. As I felt this most identified with how the course was designed and contributed to the success and outcome of the evaluation project.

Social Presence connection to the course, allowed each of the members of the course to develop a relation with one another, as well as the organization; the people that worked for, and are/were involved in the program.

Cognitive Presence connection to the project allowed each of the members to connect, brainstorm, generate resolutions and build an evaluation of the program, providing the best possible suggestion to the fellow board members.

Teaching Presence connection to the project, allowed each of the member of the group to work with the instructor and course material to execute and proper and effective evaluation while simultaneously learning the concepts and theories of the course. The instructor provided guidance and resources for the completion, and presentation of the final work.

The level of research done for the effectiveness of the class looking back appears to have been done thoroughly. The Community of Inquiry Theory appears to have been utilized with respect to the course. In Simmonon's Text (Chapter 3), he references 'the big three.' One being collaboration, which is the main point I want to drive home here. Although the other two (Learning Time and Materials) are relevant, for connection to the Community of Inquiry Theory I want to focus on the collaboration aspect.

In distance education it is important to focus on effective collaboration, if the outcomes for the learners are to have a group project, and have it done effectively. There is plenty of research done on the effectiveness of collaboration and how it helps students learn, but how does it factor in when leaners are not in the same classroom, or even perhaps in the same time zone? One aspect I discovered in my research is an aspect that is utilized with the current course IDT 610: Distance Education, being a wiki page for students to comment, share, discuss, etc. In an article I came across on Google Scholar, an instructor in a 'Social Work' course utilized a course wiki to promote collaboration within the course. Similarly, to the degree of WVU's IDT 610: Distance Education (and others), the wiki was utilized to promote collaboration among the students. Now in reference to the Instruction Design & Technology course on Program Evaluation a wiki was not utilized in this case. However, the application Slack was used. This allowed for an almost wiki like discission on topics throughout the semester. Again, showcasing the aspect of research done on how to make effective collaboration in a distance education course.

Community of Inquiry Theory is a great example with respect to the collaboration, and the research done in terms of how the effectiveness of the Instruction Design & Technology course on Program Evaluation. The various aspects of the course (i.e., Group Meeting, Discussions. Etc.) showcase the research done to be most effective in engagement the students with one another to create, design, implement, and execute an effective Program Evaluation, while simultaneity learning what it takes to proper do so.

The course implemented the Community of Inquiry Theory in a variety of ways. Most basically early in the course the members joined groups of three. In which then a

meeting was set with the members to discuss potential topics. After which then the three members met with the instructor to discuss the topics that were considered by the group. Suggestions were made on the part of the instructor with input from the group members. Considerations were made and then the topic for the evaluation was considered and nailed down the groups brainstorming begin. The instructor had set up small checkpoints throughout the course. Along with this there were guidelines (or a prompt) in which we follow the steps to preforming an effective and effect evaluation in the li9mietd time we had to complete the assignment.

The beginning of the evaluation is where the Social Presence of the theory stats. Each of the three members come from various backgrounds, have different careers, and different viewpoints, allowing for three distance views on the process of evaluation. Even though there were guidelines for the actual assignment each member brought in a distinct idea each step of the way. This might not always be the exact case, but in this instance, it worked out well and supported the overall project in a very positive way (I would like to think the design of the evaluation, and early conversations with the instructor helped with this).

As the evaluation was the main 'project' for the course, most of the time was spent working on this; however, each week there were topics in which we were learning, small assignments being completed, and meetings taking place. Each of these small assignments and discussions that occurred on a weekly basis for the entire class, various members of the class would provide input to one another. This also added to the Social Presence, members of the class conducted discussions to further each other's progress for their (own group) evaluations.

The Cognitive Presence was also present early in the course, each time the group of three members met conversations were had with respect to the weekly material discussed in the course and how they fit within the project and/or evaluation we were working on. This allowed for each member to grasp the concepts even more because the topics were being discussed not just during the week, but also during the meetings with the team members. Questions were asked, answers were given, debates on how to proceed best, and resolutions were made for the problems that came up. Each member of the group worked with one another compromising to make the best outcome (In this case a proper effective evaluation).

The Teaching Presence was one aspect of the theory was present but not as much as the other two, at least how I saw it. The instructor had regular meetings as needed with each group member. Where progress was discussed, suggestions were made, and changers were made accordingly. The instructor designed materials to guide the leaners through the course and allowed for the grasping of the concept of effective program evaluation. The materials utilized in the course build off one another from week to week. Along with discussions form the instructor giving feedback and guidance, this allowed for each group to learning the evaluation process while preforming an evaluation.

As a conclusion on the matter, I felt the Instruction Design & Technology course on Program Evaluation best fit the nature of the Community of Inquiry Theory. By in large the course best fit within the perimetries regarding the Community of Inquiry Theory. The three segments of the Community of Inquiry Theory provided a glimpse into how I felt the Program Evaluation curse went, what was involved in the matter, and how the result of completion of an evaluation were executed. The model of the course

provided a 'clear route' through the aspects pertaining to the Community of Inquiry
Theory.

The heavily groups-based projects and nature of the course made the Community
of Inquiry Theory a natural fit. As since the theory promotes idea generation in a
'community' aspect the course was well designed to bring a community aspect to the
course and allow for innovative ideas for creation, design, implementation, and execution
of an effective Program Evaluation.

Bibliography

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- Simonson, Michael R., et al. Teaching and Learning at a Distance. Information Age Publishing, 2019.

In the Summer of 2021, I took a Program Evaluation through the IDT Program at WVU.

Program was designed to showcase the innovative ideas for creation, design, implementation, and execution of an effective Program Evaluation and ultimately how the results of the completed evaluation are presented to the stakeholder.

Coalfield Development (~Add Background Info~)

(Theory)

I chose the Community of Inquiry Theory

Three parts:

Social Presence: Each of the members of the course to develop a relation with one another

Cognitive Presence: Members to connect, brainstorm, generate resolutions and build an evaluation of the program

Teaching Presence: Each of the member of the group to work with the instructor and course material to execute and proper and effective evaluation

Research? ~Wiki? Collaboration in Simmonson Text? – Connect Collaboration to Theory. How? What does it encompass?

Practice?

Main Project – Discussions, Meetings, Collaboration

Conclusion –

Summarize the Main Points of:

Theory – How it emphasized within course?