Running Head: Lesson Plan Critique

Lesson Plan Critique : Art Through Time

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In order to best critique my lesson plan 'Art Through time', I will begin by generally defining course outcomes and objectives, briefly describing the lesson model and design adopted. From an ETEC 512 theoretical perspective, my analysis will then evaluate how the lesson plan reflects a constructivist approach. My Critique will also analyze the integration of a WebQuest to the lesson plan through distributed cognition and situated learning tenets. The WebQuest will also be evaluated through Khoo and Cowie's motivation framework.

Description of the Course Model and Design

The lesson 'Art Through Time' explores and generates awareness in relation to Egyptian Art, and focuses on how politics and religion have influenced the art of this period. At the end of the course, learners should be able to gain knowledge and note differences in relation to how art represented experiences within the four Egyptian Dynasties. Through discussion, learners should be able to explore how politics, religion and culture have influenced Egyptian art. Learners should also have the opportunity to make meaning of learning through the creation of an art project representing their understanding.

The core of the model chosen in the lesson plan is based on philosophical, psychological, and sociological underpinnings. Thus, the curriculum design is essentially based on constructivist, experiential and cognitive theories. The six-hour lesson is learner-centered and incorporates various levels of cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning, while providing interesting, challenging and meaningful assignments that promote creativity and reflection.

How Lesson Plan Reflects ETEC 512 Theories

A Constructivist Approach

Course outcomes and objectives in the lesson focus on the individual rather than the content, providing a holistic approach to teaching based on understanding of content, not memorization. The chosen model also recognizes the importance of building a curriculum that is learner-centred, which reflects diversity and recognizes individual learning. Essentially, the cognitive behaviours focus on the mental processes involved in thinking and remembering, but also more generally about the cognitive and emotional development of learners.

The outcomes are interesting, challenging and meaningful as well as creative. The sessions are organized under conceptual sequencing strategies under various levels of learning and domains. Cranton (2000) and Morrison, Ross & Kemp (2007) These domains are cognitive, representing acquisition of knowledge through mental skills; Affective, representing the growth in feeling or emotional areas, the attitude toward learning; and Psychomotor, representing the acquired manual or physical skills. (Morrison et al., 2007)

Vigotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

My lesson plan is also based on the central tenet of Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) where, "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers." (Vygotsky, p. 86, 1978) The plan scaffolds tasks that are just beyond learner's zones of proximal development. Assignments, projects and evaluations factor in the audience, the

behavior, as well as the condition and degree related to this course. The learning outcomes consider both the scope and general outputs in combination with learner characteristics. Also, the learning outcomes are designed so learners do not feel overwhelmed or intimidated.

Modifications to Lesson Plan

Essentially, I modified the lesson plan by adding a WebQuest, and making the in-class art project collaborative in nature. In my initial plan there was inadequate time for exploration nor to discuss and reflect on newly acquired knowledge. Thus I created a WebQuest, where I felt learners were better able to achieve experiential learning through sustained reflection and discourse within a dynamic community of inquiry.

A WebQuest also offers interactive and authentic material, where learners explore and share learning with peers to build on their knowledge, complementing the reading assignment. The WebQuest is carefully constructed to scaffold activities, central to Vigotsky's constructivist theory on the "zone of proximal development". The WebQuest provides students with activities that encourage research and a blog platform where they can share their opinions with their peers. The WebQuest is a excellent example of mediating our actions through culturally embedded artifacts, in this case: Egyptian art. Through the tenets of Social constructivism, this WebQuest also offers learners an opportunity to be exposed to cultural\social material that they then discuss with their peers, as well as to use cultural and historical elements to own their learning.

I now look at the WebQuest addition under the situated learning and cognitive presence tenets, as well as how it complements course participation through Khoo and kowie's framework.

Situated Learning

To begin with, the art modeling provided by the teacher, combined with the hands-on authentic experience of collaboratively creating a work of art based on their understanding of Egyptian art, is a classic example of situated learning. Although the hands-on experience is indeed an authentic experience, the PowerPoint presentation proposed in the initial version, provided a static experience and was thus replaced with a more dynamic learning tool: a WebQuest.

Based on Constructivist principles, learners need to have previous knowledge upon which they need to build authentic experience, (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, S. 1989) this means that learners need to both read the assigned chapter and participate in the WebQuest as homework during the week (3 hours), in order to be well prepared for in-class work. The discussion elements in the WebQuest and the critiquing element in VoiceThread provide peers with ways to build and reflect on their learning. During that period the teacher adopts a learner-centered approach and acts as guide and facilitator. The teacher's job is to structure the authentic task, model an example, explain the objectives of the activity and then let the students learn by doing.

Distributed Cognition

Distributed Cognition refers to the idea cognitive processes are not limited to one person, but rather shared with various people, tools, and artifacts. (Rogers & Ellis, 1994)Thus, cognition is not just where information is processed at the individual level, but an occurrence that evolves in a complex sociocultural world. Through this perspective the initial lesson plan was essentially

a localized event where information was processed at the individual level; but by adding the interactive Webquest and partner activity it now becomes a sociocultural project.

Furthermore, adding a WebQuest provides a technology-based setting for discovering the subject, discussing, and critiquing the works of art collaboratively beyond the classroom setting. Sharing their thoughts over a blog through the WebQuest, demonstrates that the cognitive processes are not limited to the mind of one person. It also shows that knowledge can be built upon through people, tools and artifacts.

Participation viewed through the Khoo & Kowie (2010)Framework

By adding a WebQuest, I am also creating an online community where the distribution occurs through the affordances of web-based technology. Within this community, learners are able to communicate, interact, and collaborate. They can also discover knowledge, build on their understanding, and develop their skills through collaboration with their peers.

Mediating Action

Within a WebQuest, participation can also be seen as mediated action. Replacing the PowerPoint presentation with a technological element such as a WebQuest, allows learners to collaborate in a 'safe' and structured environment. The mediated blog can allow learners to discuss their learning with peers and offers them a platform for building on knowledge through a critique. The connecting within the WebQuest to find a partner for the in-class artistic project will help to develop a tie between learners. Since everyone in class is able to access both the blog and the critique, this will allow for continuity in the learning.

Participation as Situated Activity

Adding a WebQuest contributes to learners participating in an authentic blogging activity with peers about their understanding. Also, the creative partner activity allows students to participate in an authentic, situated activity. They will then share their understanding through a peer-reviewed online critique.

Participation as distributed cognition

Teaming up students to work on an art project together achieves building upon the understanding of others. The forming of small groups makes the experience more meaningful.

Participation as goal-directed

Spreading the course goals over 6 hours instead of 3 hours, helps make the goals clearer and provides scaffolding toward the completion of the assignment. Accomplishing the reading and the WebQuest assignment before the actual art project, then actualizing the project, and critiquing online through VoiceThread, provides scaffolding to achieve learning outcomes.

Conclusion

This paper has allowed me to consolidate my thinking about the different theoretical perspectives presented in ETEC 512, and determine how these can be applied in my own educational practice. At first I did not think I could do much to improve my lesson, but both the addition of the WebQuest and the collaborative art project are activities that improve the lesson by making deliberate use of social and physical contexts. Thus, this improved lesson plan reflects the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary for the process of learning to take place. In my opinion, these additions provide an excellent example of learning as a constructive activity. (Von Glasersfeld, 2008)

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