

Insidious Pedagogy?

The pedagogy behind Learning Management Systems

Online learning is becoming more part of our everyday offerings, across the SCD. Online learning usually involves using some sort of "Learning Management System" (LMS). Commonly used LMSs in higher education include *Blackboard* and *Moodle*. In the SCD we don't use Blackboard, but several MIs are using Moodle and others have developed their own customized LMS. A Learning Management System can be a great resource for lecturers, providing a means of "containing" the course content, managing student learning and interaction as well as managing course administration.

But is there more to a LMS than meets the eye? Do you control your LMS or does it control you?

Lisa M. Lane addresses this question in an interesting article, "*Insidious Pedagogy: How Course Management Systems Impact Teaching*". Lane asks to what extent does a technological tool, like a learning management system, drive the teaching and learning environment? The article is available at:

<http://www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2530/2303>

Lane suggests that learning management systems, like any other

technology, have an inherent purpose implied in their design, and therefore a built-in pedagogy. This is supported by Hannon (2009) who reminds us that technologies always embody a condensed set of relations. They represent the end of a process of design and development which involves many participants and in which selections and decisions about pedagogy, teaching and learning have already been

structivist systems (such as Moodle).

Moodle is described by Lane as an "Opt-In" system because it allows the instructor to select each activity and presentation factor from a menu list. Fewer defaults are pre-set, which encourages the instructor to think more holistically about the structure of the online learning environment. In Moodle, features such as chat, polls, and interactive lessons are options presented with the same weight as more traditional text-based resources. Thus there is less of an implication that interactivity is key, and more of an implication that interactivity is important. (This is less true of an "opt-out" system, such as Blackboard, which predisposes lecturers to focus on transmission of content, argues Lane.) In an Opt-In environment, the instructor makes choices about context on a macro level, and choices about features and tools on a micro level. This makes it possible to explore pedagogical options more freely

So, where do we start when using an LMS?

Lane suggests that teaching faculty step back and consider their teaching approaches first, before they enter the LMS. In other words, pedagogy should always come before technology. The LMS needs to be viewed primarily as a tool for teaching and learning. *Cont. p2>*

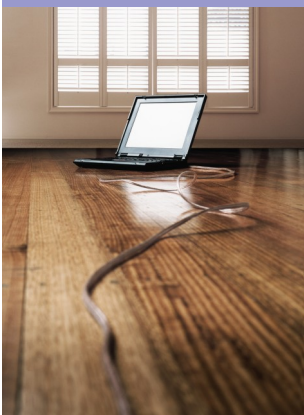


made. While this may not necessarily be a bad thing, it is as well to be aware of it, so that we can understand its parameters.

Lane says that Learning Management Systems used for presenting online or technology-enhanced classes can influence pedagogy by presenting default formats designed to guide the instructor toward creating a course in a certain way. Lane comments that this is particularly true of integrated systems (such as Blackboard/WebCT), but suggests it is also a factor in some of the newer, more con-

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Instead of asking “what does this technology do?”, we would be better off asking “what can I do with it?”

Insidious Pedagogy? (cont. from p.1)

The way the technology tool is used will depend at least partly on the purpose of the teacher in using it.

The temptation for a teacher when faced with a new LMS is to look at all its features, then work out how to use them. But if we do this we are really putting the cart before the horse. Instead of asking “what does this technology do?”, we would be better off asking “what can I do with it?” This helps us to be in charge of the technology, rather than the other way around. We don’t want to end up leaving our pedagogical goals behind and creating a piecemeal course, that has lots of technological “bells and whistles” but doesn’t help students meet the learning outcomes.

So where do we start? As in all teaching, a good place to start in preparing to teach using a LMS is with the learning outcomes for the course or unit being taught. What do we expect that our students will learn as an outcome

of this course? The learning outcomes then provide a framework in which the learning activities can sit.



Using the learning outcomes as the basis for the design of the unit will not only help your students achieve the learning outcomes, it will also provide clear goals and help you to develop a clear structure for the online unit.

It can also be helpful for instructors to think about their teaching style. Everyone teaches differently – what is your preferred teaching style? What do you expect you will find challenging about teaching in an online environment? What will you need to change in adapting from a face to face to an online environment?

The answers to these sorts of questions can make a difference to the sort of learning activities you do, or don’t, choose to include in your unit. After reflecting on these you will be in a better position to select from the range of learning activities provided by the LMS. Instructors new to online learning will also be less likely to be overwhelmed by the process, if they have taken the time to think about their pedagogy first.

For more ideas and resources on developing online learning activities have a look at the SCD Online Learning Resources on the Coursework Sandpit Wiki: [“Designing an Engaging Online Course”](#).

Lisa M. Lane, (2009), *Insidious Pedagogy: How Course Management Systems Impact Teaching*, *First Monday Online Journal*, 14, (10)

Hannon, John. (2009) *Breaking down online teaching: Innovation and resistance*, *Australian Journal of Educational Technology*, 25(1),14-29

Spotlight on Teaching

St Louis, Missouri USA to Epping, NSW Australia: Web Conferencing @Emmaus Bible College

This semester at Emmaus we have been using Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro to deliver one of our courses in the BTh.

Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro software allows the user to host Web Conferencing, e-learning and Web Seminars. At Emmaus, we are using the program for Web Conferencing, which provides us the opportunity to have our lecturer work out of his office in St Louis, Missouri, in the US while our students sit in their classroom at Epping.

Web Conferencing is an easy, effective and enjoyable way to teach and learn. Teaching is via

the setting of the virtual classroom. There are no software download requirements for either the students or the lecturer. The web conferencing is available on demand through any web browser, even with a low-bandwidth connection.



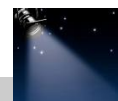
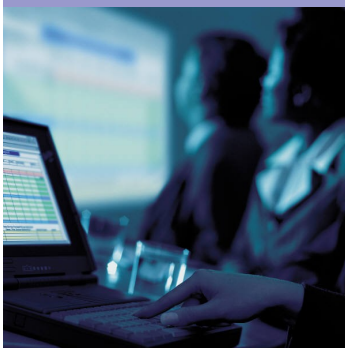
Our lecturer logs onto the Emmaus hosting site and using a webcam and microphone can communicate effectively and efficiently with our students. The software allows the lecturer to use power-point presentations, or to upload maps and diagrams, display relevant texts for class-

room viewing or use the program as a white board for writing notes for the class. Students watch the screen and interact as if the lecturer was in the room. With four microphones strategically placed in the classrooms there is always clear communications with a slight delay in audio.

Where students are remote from the classroom, the system allows them to interact as if they are in the classroom or they can choose to use live texting.

The class is automatically recorded for future reference; we upload the class onto our e-learning site on our web page for students to revisit the lesson if required at a future date.

Dr Leonard Smith, Emmaus



Spotlight on Resources

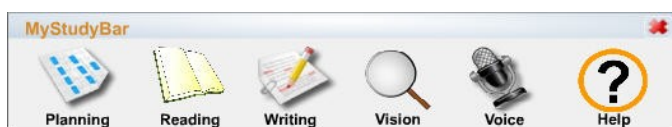
Free Apps for Supporting Learning and Accessibility

Some of our distance/online students have accessibility issues (vision, hearing, movement) or special learning needs.



EduApps provides free resources that students or lecturers can download and use in their teaching or study to help make online learning more accessible and customizable for student needs.

<http://www.eduapps.org/>



For example, *MyStudyBar*, provides a suite of apps to support literacy.

Together, these have been designed to support the complete study cycle from research, planning and structuring to getting across a written or spoken message.

MyStudyBar has 6 sections; each has a drop down menu offering personal choice, flexibility and independent learning, particularly for those learners who require additional strategies to support their learning.

Examples include: Xmind for planning and organization; T-Bar for customising font and colour backgrounds; Lingoes for when you need a talking dictionary; LetMeType for help with text input, and Balabolka for converting text to audio. And if all that's

not enough, there's even a speech-to-text app which allows you to talk to your computer.

Students can use *MyStudyBar* straight from a USB stick (if using a machine that is not their own, for example) or it can be installed directly to the desktop.

Some of the other Apps available at EduApps include:

AccessApps, provides a range of solutions to support writing, reading and planning, as well as sensory, cognitive and physical difficulties.

TeachApps, a collection of software specifically designed for teachers or lecturers.

LearnApps, as its name implies, is specifically designed for learners. All learners or students can benefit from *LearnApps*.

Copyright & Intellectual Property Issues Upcoming Webinars

ACODE (Australasian Council on Open, Distance & E-learning) is running two webinars on copyright and intellectual property issues in higher education, particularly as they relate to Open Educational Resources (OER).

ACODE is making these webinars open for anyone who is interested.

Webinar One: Open educational resources within copyright legislation in Australia

Friday 22 October 2 pm to 3 pm Australian Eastern Summer time

This webinar will be conducted by Delia Browne, National Copyright Director, National Copy-

right Unit, Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA).

Delia's main focus will be on the Australian copyright and creative commons scene, although she will mention the Otago Polytechnic and new NZ government initiatives.

The webinar link is <https://sas.illuminate.com/m.jnlp?sid=2007205&password=M.1124A88B8236934E5001A55DAD0DFB>

A recording of the session will be available from here after the event.

Webinar Two: Institutions and Intellectual Property

Friday 29 October 2 pm to 3 pm Australian Eastern Summer time.

This webinar will be conducted by Dr Stephen Marshall, Acting Director, University Teaching Development Centre, Victoria University of Wellington.

A significant barrier to adoption of open licensing within academia is the policies of the universities themselves. This session will provide a forum for discussion of copyright and intellectual property policies and the issues that need to be resolved if staff are to take advantage of open resources effectively.

The webinar link is <https://sas.illuminate.com/m.jnlp?sid=2007205&password=M.078977D42CB6BD8FF4A11527FC469E>
A recording of this session will be available after the event.

These webinars will be held via *Illuminate*, a web based conferencing tool. If you have not used *Illuminate* before you will require a head set with microphone and should log onto the session 15 minutes early to check your audio set up.

If you are intending to attend either of these sessions, please register via email to Secretariat@acode.edu.au



Post Office Box 1882
Macquarie Centre
NSW 2113
Web: www.scd.edu.au

Tel: (02) 9889 1969
Fax: (02) 9889 2281
Email: dianeh@scd.edu.au



Newsletter Contributions

Contributions from all faculty and staff are encouraged.

Send your contributions, comments and suggestions to Diane Hockridge, SCD Distance Education Officer at dianeh@scd.edu.au.

Monthly deadline for contributions: first Friday of each month. Next deadline Friday 5 November.

Newsletter is available online at the [Coursework Sandpit Wiki](#).