TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

There are many advantages to using technology in the classroom. Digital technologies provide a useful assessment tool. Devices, such as iClickers, can be used to monitor student participation and conceptual understanding over time. On-line learning environments, such as Blackboard or ANGEL, enable instructors to extend the class discussion beyond the confines of the classroom, share pertinent course information, and participate in on-line discussions. Digital technologies also provide a unique opportunity to bring resources into the classroom that might not be available otherwise. For example, instructors can invite guest lecturers from around the world to speak with their classes through video conferencing. This is a tremendously exciting opportunity considering financial and time constraints. Students are able to take part in discussions with and learn from some of the most renowned people in their fields of study.

However technology can also pose certain challenges. Depending on the type of course (i.e. on-line, hybrid, or standard), technology must be implemented in different ways. For example, in on-line courses, do students have an opportunity to interact with the professor and if so how is this accomplished? Are they required to participate in weekly chats? Another important issue with digital technologies concerns usage. The technology is only as good as the person wielding it. If the instructor does not understand the technology and it’s advantages, it’s effective use in the classroom will be obviated. The purpose of this competency area is to address these issues, in order to ensure that I, as an instructor, understand how to use technology in the classroom. Within this competency I have learned about a variety of different digital technologies and I have begun to understand how they can be used effectively in the classroom.

During the May 2010 Certification in College Teaching Institute, I participated in the workshop “Integrating Technology in the Classroom” presented by Dr. Scott Schopieray. Before attending this workshop, I was reluctant to use technology in my classroom because I was concerned that it might be more of a distraction than an aid. I was not convinced that this competency area would be useful for me. However, my participation in this workshop proved to be enlightening and beneficial. I learned that technology is a novel asset to the instructor, it can be used to support traditional instruction, and there is a plethora of exciting new ways to integrate digital technology in the classroom.

Before this workshop I was very unfamiliar with all the available strategies for using technology in the classroom. Dr. Schopieray introduced a number of new technologies and demonstrated how they could be used in the classroom. For example, backchannel chatting using an on-line chat room or Twitter can be an asset for informal peer discussions and formative assessment. If a student does not understand a concept during lecture, a backchannel chat provides an opportunity for other students to discuss the concept with the first student to help them grasp the concept. Additionally, the instructor can look back at the chat record after class to see what the students understood, what they misinterpreted, and what they found most interesting.

One technology strategy Dr. Schopieray introduced that I was particularly interested in implemented in my classroom was the use of recorded lectures. Pre-recorded lectures are inherently useful to students because the more they are exposed to the material, the better their overall performance will be. Recorded lectures can be assigned as homework
to provide basic introductory information about a subject. Interspersed throughout the lecture, quiz questions can be used to track student participation and provide formative assessment. In-class time can then be used more effectively to develop students’ understanding of the concepts. If students had a difficult time grasping the material in the recorded lecture, in-class time can be used to review that material. On the other hand, if students performed well on the quizzes, in-class time can be used for discussions, case-base learning, and activities that build upon the introductory material and deepen students’ comprehension.

During this workshop I learned a great deal about my own teaching practices and what I can do to improve my presence in the classroom. Integrating digital technology in the classroom can be intimidating, however I know have a better understanding of how to use these new techniques effectively. Attending this workshop gave me the confidence to experiment with and use digital technology in the classroom.