Starting with stories: Harnessing the LMS to support diverse ways of being a teacher in online learning environments

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Narrative Inquiry into Online Teaching

Guiding Research Questions

- What is online teaching?
- Who are we in this space?

Context

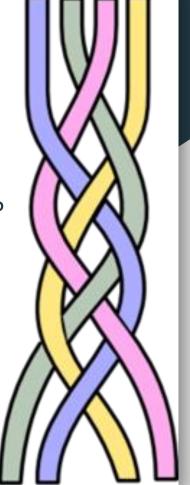
- Four post-secondary teacher educators with a range of experience teaching online graduate courses (1 - 20 yrs)
- Moodle was the LMS used in our courses

Narrative Threads

• Who am I as an online teacher?

What forms of teaching and learning matter most to me?

How and where does learning occur?



Teaching ... it's living in community (Jennifer)

I feel exhilarated after my two hour class with preservice teachers. The elevator opens and I walk down the hall to my office. I drop my backpack onto the floor and melt into my office chair. I am exhausted. I reflect on the differences in my teaching life as I open up eClass to check in on my online grad class. I think about place, pace, preparation, and the opportunity to pause.

... When I think about my teaching, because I taught in Indigenous communities, it's about live-in communities right? It's living in community.

Teaching ... it's living in community (Jennifer)

Discussion Participation Rubric

Moodle Rubrics:

Encouraging online

community engagement
in discussion forums
through embedded
rubrics

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Presence	Maintains a consistent and valuable presence in the conversational flow of the discussion	Maintains a consistent presence in the conversational flow of the discussion	Maintains a presence in the conversational flow of the discussion.	Does not maintain a presence in the conversation.
Response to Others	Consistently follows discussion threads and raises the discussion to new levels. Engages with questions and wonderings	Follows discussion threads and raises the discussion to new levels. Engages with questions and wonderings of group mates.	Responses are appropriate but do not raise the level of discussion. May share personal expertise or interest.	Responses are simplistic and echo contributions of others. Does not respond to others/no posts.
Integration and synthesis of concepts and principles	Responses reflect a deep understanding of course concepts and principles.	Responses reflect an understanding of course concepts and principles.	Responses reflect a basic understanding of course concepts and principles.	Responses do not reflect an understanding of course concepts and principles.

Creating learning moments, learning situations (Jerine)

My early memories of school often involved conflicts between how I was being taught and how I wanted to learn. Even as a young child, I didn't really see the importance of being in a classroom to learn.

I don't have an idealized image of school.

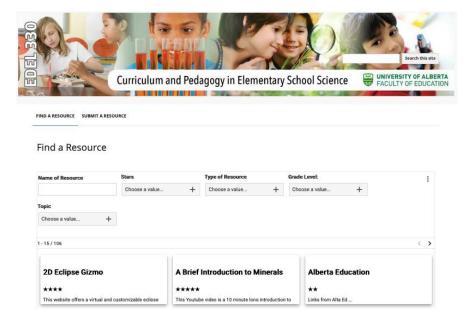
I have few positive memories of learning IN school.

To me, what's important is creating learning moments, learning situations

--that, doesn't have to happen in a classroom.

Creating learning moments, learning situations (Jerine)

Moodle Apps (e.g. Database)



Moodle Integration with other Tools



Student created Google Site

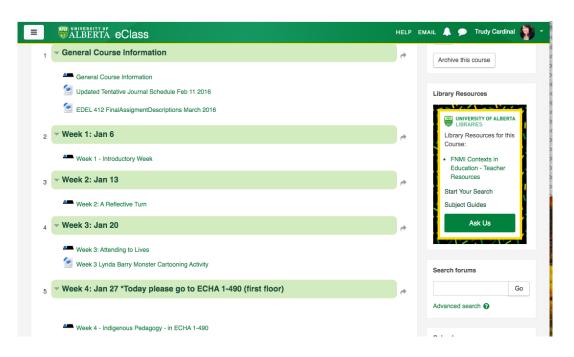
Citation: Cardinal et al. (in review)

Organize eClass ... To Tab or not to Tab (Trudy)

I looked at the eClass page. Keep it simple. Organize eClass so that it makes sense. To Tab or not to Tab. Another box, all documents here. All assignments here. No, it looks confusing. Messy. I can't follow it. I want tabs and dates separate, one topic at a time not to overwhelm. Logical order, steps one, two, three. Is online teaching like that? Can it be? Steps one, two, three?

In this online space I did not always feel fully human in my responses to students, but I realized that this is not the way our souls had been living the experience. Instead as our eyes met during our only face-to-face meeting, our souls said "there you are". They knew me. I knew them. We hugged and said, "it is so good to see you face to face" and I would add, "and your whole body too."

Organize eClass ... To Tab or not to Tab (Trudy)

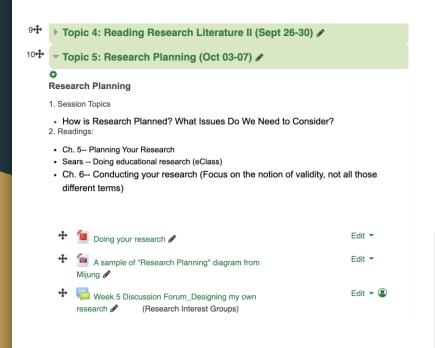


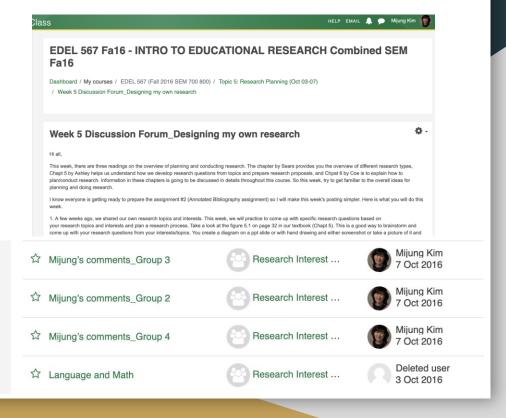
'Am I a facilitator' 'Who am I in this space ...' (Mijung)

One day I was trying to help a student with his questions via email and at the end of the email conversation, he wrote, 'I'm really enjoying it far more than I expected. **You've been an amazing facilitator** of some difficult topics. Have a great day'. At first I was really happy to hear that he has been learning and enjoying the course so far.

But then this email started to challenge me to ask 'Am I a facilitator?' 'Who am I in this space and in this course?' Why am I not comfortable with this word, 'facilitator'? I'm still struggling to identify who I am in an online space, and who I want to be. My expectation is that I want to be a teacher in my own definition.

'Am I a facilitator' 'Who am I in this space ...' (Mijung)





Lessons Learned

- Each of our teacher narratives are unique
- The ways that we utilized the Moodle LMS were integrally connected to our teacher identities, our views of what matters in regards to teaching and learning, and how we conceptualize the learning/teaching environment.

Implications

- Stories of teaching and learning matter and should be central to the instructional design process.
- Supporting instructors and students to understand the mechanics and available tools of an LMS is important,
- but we must also pay attention to the personal beliefs about teaching and learning that are held by instructors (and students) and how that might inform instructional design.

Questions to ask educators (and learners)

- What are the learning experiences that have mattered most to you?
- When was a time that you felt like a really good teacher?
- What matters most to you when teaching?
- Where did your most important learning experiences occur?
- What tensions do you experience with online teaching?

Thank you!

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