TITLE: To imitate or originate – adapting to the culture of academic integrity

Give your report an informative title and mention the discipline/diploma/module you are putting online

The module that I am putting online is one on Academic Integrity

CONTEXT Which current international and/or local trends are a trigger for your investigation?

The South African Education sector as a whole as come under the spotlight of the present Government with particular mention in the State of the nation address by J G Zuma, President of the country, on the 03 June2009. There is a further drive to streamline the sector by possibly splitting the Education Ministry at a national level in that due attention is given to school education and University education respectively. (www.iol.co.za)

In as much as we would like to increase the number of learners entering tertiary education and increase the throughput rate, this should not be done by compromising on the standards and/or quality of the education that the system provides.

Part of ensuring qualitative qualifications, is the whole issue of ensuring Academic Integrity. This inadvertently means adjusting and/or changing the way we do things, in terms of the types of assignments set, educating learners on what constitutes acceptable behaviour and acceptable and appropriate writing styles.

CHALLENGES

The library and teaching are not terms or concepts that necessarily go together and so for many including students and academics, there exists this impression that associates the library as a support department that aids or supports learning and teaching but is not an active participant in the learning process. Even the organisational structure places the library as a support service. This is a challenge that all academic libraries face.

The fact that for the vast majority of our student population, English is a second language and is the language of instruction at the University. Learners are not equipped in knowing what constitutes Academic language/writing, as this was not an issue at secondary school. At university we expect them to write in a particular manner without necessarily providing the training or skills to develop them in this regard.
The culture or mindset that many learners subscribe to is one of entitlement. In that they expect to be spoonfed and are used to the kind of test that subscribes to rote learning and regurgitation

**THEORY**

Which educational theories seem most relevant to your investigation? Briefly describe each theory’s key characteristics. (Some examples are learning styles; blended learning; motivation; authentic learning; online assessment; online facilitation.)

Not everyone thinks and/or learns the same way and so why do we insists on teaching Engineers and practitioners to search and learn like librarians do. Do they care much for Broader terms and truncations or are they visual learners? When visiting a doctor, would we be happy with him saying that I know how to do open heart surgery because I read the articles about it or would we be happy with someone that knows because he witnessed and was part of the learning experience. It is this thinking that has prevoked me to take a different route in designing the module. Standing in front of the class and talking about the do’s and don’t does not hit home quite like experiencing it first hand and so I have subscribed to an authentic learning style, that makes the learning real and more direct. I have recognised that within every group, there exists diversity in terms of cognitive, social and economic aspects. Each of these issues has bearing on the way the learner in question may interact within the learning environment, not to mention with each other and so designing a learning environment that levels the playing fields will assist in addressing the diversity and establishing some degree of balance and equitability in the offering.

Literature distinguishes between the different types of learners based on how they learn:

**Visual Learners:** Learn by looking. They benefit from visuals like illustrations and pictures.

**Auditory Learners:** These learners learn by hearing and listening.

**Kinesthetic Learners:** These learners learn by touching and doing.

(Advanogy.com 2003-2007)
Thus it is clearly seen that the various learning styles has an effect on our teaching styles, and should be factored in when designing a lecture, be it traditional (classroom) or innovative (on-line learning).

In attaining this, a blended learning style was adopted to accommodate learners from both sides of the digital divide, namely digital immigrants (those that had to adjust and learn about functioning in an online environment) and digital natives (generation X and Y that were born into a digital environment).

Artificial intelligence has a place and its limitation as well, and so by complementing this module with the option of face to face interaction with a librarian, does accommodate those learners that require human interaction

**METHODOLOGY**

**What is action research and how have you used the methodology's structure for your investigation?**

Action Research is fundamentally based on the principle of try, try again. It is aptly put in this children's song Try, Try Again

Written By: Anonymous  
Adapted By: Terry Kluytmans  
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http://www.kididdles.com/lyrics/t058.html

It's a lesson all should heed,  
Try, try, try again;  
If at first you don't succeed,  
Try, try, try again;  
Then your courage will appear,  
If you only persevere,  
You will conquer, never fear!  
Try, try, try again.

Two or three times you should fail,  
Try, try, try again;  
If at last you would prevail,  
Try, try, try again;  
When you try it's no disgrace  
If you fail to win the race,  
Bravely, then, in such a case  
Try, try, try again.
ACTION RESEARCH

It is continuous loop of discovery and investigation to improve. O’Brein (1998) talks about the processes involved in action research namely: plan, act, observe, reflect. It involves collaboration, participation and reflection and comes down to learning by doing.

We have established that something needs to change to ensure Academic integrity

Initially I started with the idea of uploading into the online environment, the entire Information Literacy course that is being offered, of which one lesson was Academic Integrity. After starting to upload my content, I realised that it is not just about uploading e-version of lessons, but required some degree of redesign and so opted to start small and focus on one module being Academic integrity.

DESIGN

The vision

What is the vision for your online classroom in the long term?

Clearly this content is not specific to a particular course or subject discipline, as it can be used across the board and at different level. Referencing is the same whether you do it at high school or at a doctoral level.

What matters lies to some extent in writing skills, knowing how to analyse and appropriately apply information found in a manner that maintains academic integrity but at the same time strengthens your argument. It is in the application and the subsequent acknowledgement that many learners face the hurdle.

Academic Integrity is not just about plagiarism. It is about educating learners about what constitutes good practise and referencing is that practise. We need to foster a culture that recognises why we reference and that is:

- Acknowledge the source
- Establish credibility
- Create a trail – trace sources
- Citation tracking

It is about creating knowledge and justifying arguments.

The vision is to develop the course such that it operates to some extent as a knowledge portal that would have everything that is necessary to equip a learner
with the knowledge and skills required in subscribing to good academic practice. It will have tutorials, links to websites, interactive exercises and online assessment that would test one's understanding on the issue.

**Active learning**

How will the online course encourage interaction/collaboration/engagement/participation/active learning?

Literature speaks extensively about learning styles

Most learners learn better by doing than listening to a lecture

**Working smart**

How will you use this mode of teaching and/or the Learning Management System's capabilities to make your life easier?

At the library, we are constantly approached by department to conduct training on referencing. What we have come to realise is

1. Learning how to reference becomes quite abstract if you do understand why you should reference. Also due to some extent to the lack of integration between the library and the department, learners don't see the link and therefore don't necessarily regard library programs as core.
2. Most academics seem to think that the whole issue of plagiarism and referencing is the responsibility of the library. On the contrary, it should start in the department and a once-off lecture at the beginning of the year is not good enough and giving out a reference guide on induction is not good enough. It needs to be incorporated into the lesson and learners need to be inundated at every possible chance about how to avoid plagiarism. This will encourage a culture of reading and enquiry and critical analytical thinking. After all we are in the business of developing lifelong learners.

**Blended learning**

How will "the blend" work? Consider how you could keep the best of both worlds, combining paper with electronic resources, and face to face interaction with online activities. (Don't throw out the baby with the bathwater...)

As the library does not offer set lectures except of course for certain programs within the Extended Curriculum Program, our interaction with the same students is limited, compared to lecturers that see student in a more structures arrangement.
What we found though is that not everyone interacts with an online environment the same. Some are more fluent than others and so the fact that we make provision for face to face interaction does address those learners that need personalised attention. Printed sources are always available like for example the referencing guide and the policy.

IMPLEMENTATION
Pilot activity

Describe the pilot activity you have tried out with one or two users (or your real students...not compulsory, but first prize!)

I gave access to a few working colleagues. Although there was limited content, they were advised to consider the concept and its possible application.

Relevance

What is the relevance between this activity and the challenges and opportunities you have identified?

The infrastructure is an institutional issue.

I do feel that this classroom provides a non threatening environment within which learners can acquire and develop their skills at their own pace.

Feedback

What feedback did you receive from users?

My colleagues thought it was an idea that could work and so saw its potential.

There was an area of concern that spoke to the limited infrastructure and bandwidth at the university as being an obstacle.

REFLECTION
Assumptions

Which assumptions did you make and what did you learn from your assumptions after implementing the activity?

Future adjustments

In the light of the feedback received and the lessons you have learnt, how will you adjust/adapt/change your activity and/or your classroom during the next action research cycle?
I think it might be wise to bring others on board, in terms of deciding on the structure and content that should be included.

An aspect I need to look into is getting all students to login to the module. This may mean linking up with the ITS student database.

**Impact**

What impact do you envisage this intervention could make, or has made on either or all of the following: you, your learners, the curriculum and the institution?

At this stage I can only speak for myself as it has not been opened out to other users as it is incomplete. It takes up a lot of time and effort in rethinking how it should be done to be most effective. As I said, it is not just about uploading e-version of documents.

**Lessons learnt**

What lessons have you learnt overall during the year in which you have become an online facilitator?

Deciding to use an online environment is not as easy as just digitising existing content. It requires rethinking the approach and repackaging the data in a format that is now conducive to an online environment and that is still appealing to the learner concerned.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Please use the Harvard referencing method, should you reference any readings. The Mind Map group project should be cited as an unpublished report.


