Chapter XI
Implementation and Evaluation of Online Courses

INTRODUCTION

As stated in the discussion of the ADDIE model in the last chapter, implementation and evaluation are part of the development process. Once online course materials are developed, the next task is to deploy the course materials to students. The first topic of this chapter will deal with the issues related to the deployment of online course materials. In this chapter, we will discuss the tasks such as planning and training involved in the deployment process.

Once the online course materials have been deployed, there will be a large number of requests from the students for help on technology and course content related issues. To keep the online teaching/learning system running successfully, we need a strong technical support team including experienced computer service personnel, instructors, and fellow students. This chapter will deal with the issues related to technical support. We will discuss various ways to provide technical support services.

The development of an online teaching/learning system and course materials are often a complex process. Even with the careful design and planning, errors may still occur and there are always things that need to be improved. To correct errors, the first step is to identify the problems. Often, instructors and students are the first to know if there is a problem or something needs to be improved. This chapter will discuss the issues on how to reach out to users such as students and instructors to
collect their response and feedback, and how to fix problems as soon as possible to ensure the quality of teaching and learning. The improvement of the online teaching/learning system and course materials will be based on the feedback from the instructors and students. In this chapter, we will also discuss the topics related to course evaluation which will be used as a guideline for further improvement.

BACKGROUND

The topics covered in this chapter involve the implementation and evaluation phases of the ADDIE model. Studies in these two areas are very active. A number of papers have been published on these subjects. Smitherman, Nasseh, and Repp (2005) reported a case study about the deployment of interactive media materials through a wireless network to schools, students’ homes, and surrounding neighborhoods. In their paper, they also analyzed the impact of the rich media materials on students’ learning and social activities. They described how the teachers and students were prepared for the deployment and how they used the rich media materials.

In another paper, Omwenga, Waema, Eisendrath, and Libotton, (2005) discussed an objectives-driven e-content structuring and deployment model. They presented an intuitive approach to content structuring and sequencing in the subjects of liberal arts, sciences and engineering. In their study, the knowledge presentation objectives were identified, starting from the most abstract to the most specific. These objectives were used to help break up the course content and sequence. From their analysis, they concluded that the objectives were very important and could be effectively used to validate the course content, and they also found that the collaboration among homogenous groups was the most efficient in training of content development.

Every successful online teaching/learning program must be supported by effective technical support. In their paper, Gibbs and Rice (2003) described the difficulty of technical support in K-12 schools. Because the use of new technology dramatically increased the needs of technical support for the classroom teaching, they developed Web-based software to train the teachers with the information on troubleshooting simple hardware and software problems as part of the teachers’ professional development. The training provided the necessary skills for the teachers to solve some commonly encountered technical problems by themselves before calling technical support. The features and usage of the Web-based training software is described in their paper.

Support can also be carried out by students and teachers through Web-based communication. Scherff and Paulus (2006) discussed the issues related to the support for new teachers. In their study, a computer-mediated communication technology was used to connect pre-service teachers in their internship training anytime and
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