Chapter 18
An Interface Design Evaluation of Courses in a Nursing Program using an E-Learning Framework: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Interface design refers to the overall look and feel of an e-learning program by the end user (Hall, as cited in Khan, 2005). Initially designed for corporate use, the World Wide Web as it is now known surfaced in the early 1990s. Individual use grew rapidly in the 1990’s, with “online users doubling or tripling every year” (When Guide, n.d.). Online degree granting educational programs slowly developed. An early fully online RN (Registered Nurse) to BSN (Bachelor of Science in Nursing) program was the Collaborative Nursing Program (CNP) in Wisconsin. The CNP, now called the “BSN@Home” program, started in 1995, to serve associate degree and diploma prepared nurses throughout the state of Wisconsin desiring...
a baccalaureate degree in nursing. This statewide program continues to be delivered collaboratively by five University of Wisconsin (UW) nursing programs (UW-Eau Claire, UW-Green Bay, UW-Madison, UW-Milwaukee, and UW-Oshkosh). A critical look at interface design in this program was undertaken with methods and outcomes detailed below.

INTRODUCTION

The BSN@Home program at UW-Green Bay is a unique collaboration that has been highly successful and allows adult learners across the state access to BSN completion and flexibility in taking online courses. Although the curriculum and courses have been revised over the years, the focus has been primarily on the quality and content of individual courses. Review of courses across the curriculum has primarily focused on critical content required to meet professional nursing standards and has not focused on the user perspective. A review of the interface design of the BSN@Home courses has not previously been undertaken. Being an online program, the BSN@HOME faculty is challenged to stay abreast of and integrate the latest in educational technology and health care informatics.

Review and evaluation of the interface design of the BSN@Home program was undertaken in 2010, using the E-Learning Framework (Khan, 2005). A case study of the process is detailed in this chapter.

BACKGROUND

Nursing and E-learning

Online enrollment is growing at meteoric rates and at higher rates than overall higher education enrollments (Greer, 2010; Allen & Seaman, 2011). Nursing programs, especially RN to BSN programs, are well suited for online learning and have been part of the growth boom. The BSN@Home program is a unique collaboration among five UW nursing programs to deliver an RN to BSN program. Associate Degree or diploma prepared nurses enrolled in the program need to complete general education credits, nursing support courses and core nursing courses. A “home school” model is used, whereby students apply to any of the five UW programs and follow the specific academic requirements of their chosen home school.

Five core nursing courses (18 credits) are shared among the UW partners and form the majority of nursing credits required. Each UW campus developed and continues to be responsible for teaching one of the five core courses in the program. Although subcommittees developed course objectives, each core nursing course was developed by an instructor with the assistance of an instructional designer. Over the years, courses have been revised in an iterative manner. Although a consistent UW technology support service has been used to assist with development and maintenance of courses, a formal brand was not established across courses at the onset. Fairly high turnover of instructional designers has impacted consistency within the program design. A BSN@Home Steering Committee, composed of one representative from each campus, provides a structure for collaboration and curriculum review.

There are new challenges facing health care educators everywhere and many of the changes are driven by forces outside of health care academia. Health care informatics is the powerful combination of knowledge and methods from healthcare, computer, library and statistical sciences with the latest information technology (Johns Hopkins, n.d.). Recent incentives, including the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, encourage meaningful use of health information technology by 2014 and have fueled a spike in nursing and health informatics (American Recovery and