Chapter IX

NGCMS: Exploring and Supporting Effective Faculty Use

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Abstract

The effective faculty use of course management systems (CMS) is the key to the successful online instructional delivery. This chapter focuses on two main areas: 1) understanding CMS to innovatively adapt and customize CMS to accomplish educational objectives; and 2) understanding the process of technology adoption from the perspectives of developing effective faculty training programs for using CMS to ease the transition of incorporating technology into the process of teaching.

Introduction

CMS are becoming increasingly important as part of academic systems in institutions of higher learning (Morgan, 2003). CMS have been in use for
decades, but because of the complicated process of adoption, their use is still in the stage of being tested, evaluated, and improved. The adoption of CMS is not merely a simple process of learning and using a new technology, but is, more importantly, a challenge to the mindset of the “higher education mission that has been the subject of refinement and protection for nearly a millennium” (Katz, 2003, p. 9). The focus of this chapter is on exploring the issues related to a better understanding of CMS from educational perspectives, of faculty technology adoption, and of CMS support within extended faculty development strategies.

What CMS Promise to Do and Their Limitations

CMS include features and tools for delivering content, for sharing and managing materials, for promoting both synchronous and asynchronous communication and virtual collaboration, and for assessing students’ learning. Because CMS can provide functionality that meets the needs of the academic challenges in an online learning environment, “the number of faculty and students committed to a CMS is growing” (Carmean & Haefner, 2003, p. 4). For example, the University of Houston has experienced a 15 percent increase in the use of CMS each year. CMS impact and shape the way in which courses are structured and delivered and have “significantly changed the educational experience in many courses” (Carmean & Haefner, 2003, p. 4). Yet, a successful education cannot be automated by the sole incorporation of CMS into the educational process. The reality of using CMS is not as rosy as those mission statements purport. It is necessary that we understand the complexity of education and both the advantages of CMS that can be used to benefit education and the limitations that might impede education.

It is critical to consider both CMS advantages and limitations as related to the process of teaching. Advantages of CMS use are many. CMS create a secure and password-protected virtual learning environment. Cyber security has become an increasingly critical issue in online education. A secure cyber-learning space can protect educational assets as well as promote academic exchanges. Only secure learning environments can guarantee a smooth, fairly problem-free education. As instructors, you do not need to worry about the safety of your research materials or about infringements on the copyrights of
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