

*A Study of Problem of Learning Photography for Communication Module
to Develop the Patterns of Teaching Through a Virtual Classroom*

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Abstract

This study is one of the objectives of the research project on “The development of problem based learning model via virtual classroom” The results show that 1) the present condition supports the virtual class room learning/teaching for the photography for communication arts course. The computer laboratory is adequate for the learning/teaching in such manner. The students themselves have the computer usage skill and are able to access the data on the internet. 2) On the problem regarding learning/teaching management, Instructors still lacking of the effective teaching materials. On the grading and the evaluation, since each student posses the different level of basic background knowledge and that each course section contains the very large number of students, the students may not receive full attention from the instructors. Therefore, when the students have the problems and that the questions are raised in class, the immediate responses may not be possible. 3) On the guideline for developing the learning/teaching method, creating the teaching media for the virtual class room. This creates a content that is more interesting and allows the students to learn better. The virtual class room also carries the learning resource in photography for the students to conduct their own research. Its system allows the communication, in the form of text message, pictures, video conference, between the students and the instructors. With the tracking function, class participation can be checked and all activities can be conducted. Overall, the virtual class room emphasizes on the students' learning

Keywords: problem based learning, virtual classroom

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Introduction

With the evolvement of the education system, the task of the instructors has been changed from giving the lecture at the front of the class to that of introducing the course, guides, advices and helps the students in solving the problems. Many teaching techniques have been developed. Particularly, the computers have been used in learning/teaching. With the internet, the students now are able to communicate and exchange their knowledge and understanding between each other and with the instructors without having to stay in the class. Therefore, the learning/teaching has become more personal where one student can also make suggestion regarding the course. With the ability to use the resource commonly for the benefit of the students, sharing the knowledge and experience between the students is then possible. Managing the education then must follow the principle that the students can learn and improve themselves and that, in learning/teaching management, the achievement in learning of a student is the first priority.

The researcher is interested in developing the teaching media to support the learning in the communication arts photography course where the learners can learn and interact according to the happening situation. The various forms of the media such as the text messages, pictures, voice, motion pictures, three-dimensional simulations are to be used. In addition, the evaluation system and the knowledge resources related to the course are also implemented. The above specification describes the “Virtual Classroom,” which is the learning/teaching method that simulate the reality, to be used in the photography for communication arts course at the Faculty of Communication Arts, Kasem bundit University. Regarding the course, its content is about the principal of photography as a way to communicate the meaning between the originator and the receiver so that the objective of the photography is clearly delivered. To accomplish this target; the suitable photography devices, the principle and technique for taking the photographs, photograph composition and type of photography are the necessary knowledge. What is missing is the teaching media that remedies the problems exist in the present day learning/teaching.

For the research at the primary stage, the study on the learning/teaching condition that supports the education with the virtual class room together with the possible problems is conducted. In addition, the study on the guideline for the learning/teaching for the photography for communication arts course is also conducted. The result is then used to develop and improve the “Virtual Class Room,” which is the teaching media that allows the learning/teaching to match up with the changing traned and the development in information technology. This creates the pattern and the system for which the learning has no boundary and that the different means of communication can be mixed in the form of the multimedia to be used for learning/teaching. Not only this will reduce the long term cost, it provides the way for developing the learning basis and further expands the learning society. It increases the motivation since the students feel that they are part of the learning process and not just the receiving end from the instructors. Designing the “virtual class room” is to create the learning/teaching condition that imitates the actual class room where the students can use various part of it just as in the real class room. The students can exchange their knowledge and experience and present their information as obtained from their search through the network. It allows the students to attend class according to the schedule or to begin the class at their own time. With the voice and visual media, the students

can attend the group activity, fully interact, debate and exchange opinion with the instructors and the fellow students (just like in the regular chat room). For the instructors, they can install the program to track the development and evaluate the learning and the effectiveness of the course. The “virtual class room” is an innovation that helps reduce the limits in many aspects of the education. The learners can learn at they like and at their own readiness in time, places and abilities. The “virtual class room” can be arranged in and out of a conventional school or even as a leisurely learning. This effectively leads the majority of the people to be able to learn for their whole life.

Questions used in Research

1. The opinions of the instructors and the students regarding the present condition which supports the learning/teaching in the ‘virtual class room’ for the photography for communication arts course at the Faculty of Communication Arts, Kasem bundit University.

2. The opinions of the instructors and the students regarding the problems in the management of the learning/teaching in the ‘virtual class room’ for the photography for communication arts course at the Faculty of Communication Arts, Kasem bundit University

3. The opinions of the instructors and the students regarding the way to improve the learning/teaching in the ‘virtual class room’ for the photography for communication arts course at the Faculty of Communication Arts, Kasem bundit University.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives are to study the present condition which supports the learning/teaching, the problems and the way to develop the learning/teaching in the ‘virtual class room’ for the photography for communication arts course at the Faculty of Communication Arts, Kasem bundit University.

Method of Study

This study is the qualitative research in a form of group interview. The samples are 4 instructors for Photography For Communication Arts course with at least 3 years in their teaching and 12 students at the junior level that had taken Photography For Communication Arts course. For the students, they are divided into 4 groups and are also classified based on their academic records as “good”, “average” and “poor.”

Parameters for Study

The present condition which supports the learning/teaching, the problems and the way to develop the learning/teaching in the ‘virtual class room’ for the Photography For Communication Arts course to be used as the guideline to develop the “virtual class room”

Tool for Research

1. Individual interviewing for instructors in the Photography For Communication Arts course form regarding the present condition which supports the learning/teaching, the problems and the way to develop the learning/teaching in the ‘virtual class room’ for the Photography For Communication Arts course to be used as the guideline to develop the “virtual class room” which is created from the study documents and the research works related to “virtual class room.”

2. Individual interviewing for student form regarding the present condition which supports the learning/teaching, the problems and the way to develop the learning/teaching in the ‘virtual class room’ for the Photography For Communication Arts course to be used as the guideline to develop the “virtual class room” which is created from the study documents and the research works related to “virtual class room.”

The interviewing forms for the group and for the individual are for the instructors in the Photography For Communication Arts course and for the students who had taken Photography For Communication Arts course at the Faculty of Communication Arts, Kasem bundit University.

Data Collecting Procedure

The researcher collects the data with the following procedure. Study the documents and the research works related to the “virtual class room.”

1. Conduct the interview. The samples chosen for the group interview are 4 instructors in the Photography For Communication Arts course at the Faculty of Communication Arts, Kasem bundit University. The questions are structured for the group discussion on the present condition which supports the learning/teaching, the problems and the way to develop the learning/teaching in the ‘virtual class room’ for the Photography For Communication Arts course.

2. Conduct the interview. The samples chosen for the interview are 12 bachelor degree students, Kasem bundit University, who had taken the Photography For Communication Arts course. The interview includes the questions on the present condition which supports the learning/teaching, the problems and the way to develop the learning/teaching in the ‘virtual class room’ for the Photography For Communication Arts course.

3. With the data already collected, the researcher will use the data, obtained from the group interview with the instructors in the Photography For Communication Arts course at the Faculty of Communication Arts, Kasem bundit University and from the interview with the bachelor students, Kasem bundit University, who had taken who had taken Photography For Communication Arts course, to process and identify and then perform the analysis, summary, discussion and presentation so that the useful information can be used for further research.

Data Analysis

This study concentrates on studying the study the present condition which supports the learning/teaching, the problems and the way to develop the learning/teaching in the ‘virtual class room’ for the Photography For Communication Arts course to be used as a guideline for the development of the “virtual class room” for the Photography For Communication Arts course at the Faculty of Communication Arts, Kasem bundit University. By analyzing the data from the group discussion and the individual interview according to the objectives of the study, the results regarding the present condition that supports the learning/teaching, the problems and the way to develop the learning/teaching in the ‘virtual class room’ for the Photography For Communication Arts course will be used for the development of the “virtual class room.”

Results from the Study

The summary for the results obtained from the study the present condition which supports the learning/teaching, the problems and the way to develop the learning/teaching in the ‘virtual class room’ for the Photography For Communication Arts course is as described below.

Present Condition that Supports the Learning/Teaching in Virtual Class Room according to the Instructors

Regarding the learning/teaching management, the discussion with 4 instructors yields the same information that the teaching by lecturing at the front of the class is still the preferred method. There are the presentations by the students with the computer program. In the regular class, there are also the discussions, open questions and opinion exchanges between the students and the instructors. If the learning/teaching is to use the computer technology during the course, the Faculty of Communication Arts, Kasem bundit University, already has the computer laboratory and the internet for this purpose and the students themselves are able to use the computer to access the data over the internet. Two of the instructors added that in some subjects such as the history of photography, the students are suggested to search the internet by their own via the internet from various sources such as that of e-learning. However, this is done outside the regular class. The third instructor mentions that the course also requires the students to have the field trip where the students can take the photography at the outside locations. The external speakers who are highly skilled in the different kinds of photography can also be invited for the class and that the extra activities, group or individual, can also be conducted by the students. For the communication between the students and the instructors can be done via the group-facebook, email and the telephone. For class evaluation, 2 methods are used. One is the final examination and one is the class project which is in the form of photo book.

Present Condition that Supports the Learning/Teaching in Virtual Class Room according to the Instructors

Regarding the learning/teaching management, the interview with 12 students can be concluded that while the instructors are knowledgeable and can very well communicate the content, they still lack the teaching technique that stimulate the

interest. Most of the instructors prefer the lecturing. According to Vichit Suratrungchai et al (2548-2549:116) who had studied the students and the graduate students at the Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, the factor that help the students in accomplishing success in their study the most is the instructors with the next one being the students themselves. Therefore, the instructors need to listen more to the students and improve themselves. The students' opinions also corresponds to the results from the research by Vichit Suratrungchai et al (2548-2549:106) that some instructors still lack the techniques and the practicing activity while concentrate too much in lecturing and do not give clear explanation. On the students' part, they want the instructors to prepare ahead of the class and be on time. The teaching should be fun and not boring. The teaching media should be more plenty and varied. The students themselves are ready for taking the Photography For Communication Arts course via the media and the computer technology. This is because using the computer for research and making reports via the internet is very common in the nowadays life. Therefore, they do not have any problem adjusting to the learning/teaching via the media.

Problems in learning/teaching in the Photography For Communication Arts as Commented by the Instructors

At the present time, the instructors have so many responsibilities. With all the research works, the learning/teaching supporting activities and the quality assurance function, the time allowed for preparing for the class and the actual class hours are reduced. Consequentially, the content of the class may not be fully delivered and the students must study the teaching materials by themselves at their place. The content itself can also be out of date and behind the current social trend since the instructors do not have time to learn the new knowledge. For the Photography For Communication Arts course, the only media available at the current time are the power point presentation which is just a collection of still pictures, the video clips from the internet and some other equipment for general photography. These media cannot present the content with so many varieties and cannot interact individually with the students. In addition, many students also do not have the necessary equipments needed for the class such as the camera. Therefore, they may not have enough practice and may have some difficulty in using the equipments. The instructors need the more advance learning/teaching media that can remedy the said problems. Through this media, the instructors can create and change the contents by themselves. The media should also support many types of information such as the text messages, the pictures, the VIDEO clips and even that of infographics, which is presently the famous one. This kind of media helps create the students' interest and understanding in the course. Each of the instructors of the course can share their experiences, their knowledge and their source regarding the photography so that the students can do the search by themselves. At the present time, this is done by sharing the related links in the group-facebook where only a handful of students read. In fact. Most of the instructors suggest that facebook is just a helper for the communication purpose. For the required media, it must have the system that can manage the content and track the students' performance with the efficient communication system. It must be able to communicate by visual and by voice, conduct teleconference via the internet, share the knowledge in a group and must be easy to access from anywhere. It must also support various kind of computers and mobile devices. This is necessary because such devices are widely used by the students. For the problem in evaluating

the students' performances, as the students have the different levels of background knowledge and since there are so many students in the class, the instructors may not be able to take care of them effectively. Therefore, the expected media must contain the part that helps the students in adjusting their basic knowledge and regularly evaluate the teaching. This is such as having the students practice taking the photographs and then allows the students to present their works in the media so that their friends, the instructors and those who are interested in photography can make comments. The results can be analyzed and the learning/teaching can be improved. There is also the system to evaluate on class participation, class assignment and work portfolio. This corresponds to the comment by Suwit Moolkam (1999, page 25) that the evaluation based on the actual result can be conducted with many methods. They are such as by the observation, by interviewing, by grading the assignments, by having the examination, by checking the reports from both the instructors and the students, by seeing the portfolio, the short notes, the appreciation notes and the notes from the instructors, students, friends and parents and by conducting the final examination. Especially, the portfolio is the information source/evidence that shows the ability, the achievement, the progress and the pride in which the instructors and the students systematically collect and present.

Problems in learning/teaching in the Photography For Communication Arts as Commented by the Students

During the practicing period of the class, the problems that occurs or the questions that are raised cannot be forwarded immediately to the instructors due to the large number of students attending the class, which means that there is not enough time devoted to the learning/teaching. Even though there is a communication channel via facebook that allows the students to post the questions or problems regarding the practice in taking the photographs in the studio, there is still the problem about the lack of equipments for the learning. This is such as the adjusting lights and the light meters that the studio carries only the small number and, therefore, there are not enough of them for the practice. This causes some students to have less skilled in this field. If there is the tools such as the teaching media, the severity of this problem can be reduced. For example, the three-dimensional modeled images or the video clips demonstrating the usage of various equipments which can be retrieved for learning at any time will be useful for this purpose. For the performance evaluation, the students may have the very different levels of the basic knowledge. That is some of them may already have learned how to take the photographs such that they can better learn and understand the course better than those who have not. Therefore, it is recommended that there should be the teaching media that help improve the basic knowledge before the actual class. For the submission of the assignments, the instructors require the students to submit their by reproducing/enlarging the photographs. This means an expense which can be cumbersome to the students who lack the monetary supports. Therefore, it is recommended that it should be possible to submit the work as an electronic file to the system so that the instructors can look up, comment and provide the grade.

Guideline for the Development of the Learning/Teaching

1. In using the teaching media in the form of the "virtual class room" for the Photography For Communication Arts course in which various means of

communications are put together as the multimedia so that the content is more interesting and that the students can learn the material better, the learner should be able to use the media to adjust their basic knowledge. The media should also provide the activity that encourage the students to learn by themselves and should also provide the knowledge resources regarding the photography so that the students can conduct their own research. It also has the communication system that can communicate with the text messages, the VIDEO conference between the students and the instructors or between the students themselves. The tracking system for class attending and other activity participation are also necessary.

2. The media must emphasize more on the leaning by the students and less on the teaching. It reduces the teaching duty of the instructors and encourage the students to initiate their learning as stated in the idea of “Teach Less, Learn More.” This is to let the students know how to learn by themselves by accessing various sources of information. This also corresponds to the idea given by Tisna Kaemmanee (1999, page 25) which states that the learners are the most important part. The heart of the revolution on the education is to stimulate everyone to participate in the management of the education, to let them recheck and refine their thinking, their belief and their practice and to be aware of their new duty and responsibility in managing the learning in order to support, create and develop the learners so that they possess the quality expected by the society.

Suggestion

1. The result from the study found that the problems in learning/teaching in the Photography For Communication Arts course due to the learning/teaching itself is the lack of the teaching media that is stimulating for the learners. It is necessary to conduct the research to develop the learning/teaching media for the course.

2. There should be a research on the basic knowledge that is lacking by the students. This will be beneficial for the efficient learning/teaching.

3. There should be an according research where the students are divided according to their learning ability. The result can then be analyzed according to these groups. The opinion of the students from the groups with various abilities in learning can also be compared.

4. There should be a comparative study on various type of teach media so that the teaching media most suitable for the Photography For Communication Arts course can be identified.

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