Do consistency and quality content matter in online learning and do they improve student engagement?

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I designed this project to address a recurring challenge about how to improve consistency and enhance student engagement in online learning environments. Students often skip readings, avoid purchasing textbooks, and disengage from content that feels fragmented or poorly structured. This negatively impacts their learning experience and performance. My goal was to explore whether standardized, high-quality eModules could solve these issues by creating a more engaging and accessible learning environment.

The Need for the Project

The need for this project stems from two critical gaps:

- Consistency Across Sections and Semesters Without a centralized content bank, courses vary significantly depending on the instructor's proficiency in online design. This inconsistency can confuse students and diminish their trust in the learning process.
- Quality Assurance and Faculty Support Faculty often spend excessive time creating materials, which detracts from their ability to focus on facilitation and feedback. A well-designed content bank ensures quality control and frees faculty to concentrate on teaching rather than content development.

Methodology Design

I collaborated with the School of English & Liberal Studies team to implement eModules for Technical Communication, a mandatory course for students in technical programs. These modules were developed under my supervision as the subject matter expert and first deployed in Fall 2022. My SoTL project involved collecting data to determine the impact of the eModules on learners' engagement and learning experience. I proposed using a mixed method approach to measure both engagement level and performance outcomes comprehensively, including:

- Self-reporting surveys (student and faculty perspectives)
- Blackboard Ultra analytics (engagement metrics)

- Assessment results (performance indicators)
- Comparative data from ENG205 (benchmarking outcomes)

Why It's Important to Design High Quality eModules in Online Courses

Blackboard is often the primary interface between students and their courses. Poorly designed content can lead to confusion, disengagement, and inequitable learning experiences. Consistent, high-quality content:

- Provides a predictable structure that reduces cognitive load
- Enhances navigation and usability
- Supports diverse learning needs through multimedia and accessibility features
- Reflects institutional commitment to excellence in teaching and learning
- Removes financial barriers for students by eliminating the need for textbooks

Ultimately, this project underscores that thoughtful design is not optional—it is foundational to effective online education.

This project concluded when I transitioned into a new leadership role, but it was important to highlight the value of high-quality asynchronous modules in improving student engagement and learning outcomes. The Teaching and Learning Centre continues this work with their exceptional instructional design team, ensuring that the principles of consistency, accessibility, and quality remain central to online course development.