

## Assignment 1: My e-Learning experience

I am supposed to be an advocate for online learning or e-Learning right? I think it is a great medium to increase accessibility, encourage networking, share ideas with a community of learners and convenient and flexible. Unfortunately, my experience as an online learner has not been very successful. I will explain the reasons.

In 2004, I was working as an Instructional Designer in the Open and Distance Learning Unit (ODL)<sup>1</sup>, in the Learning Centre at the Fiji Institute of Technology (FIT) (now known as the Fiji National University (FNU)). I enrolled in a post-graduate certificate for online and distributed learning. The first and only online course I did was FET5601 Learning Design for Flexible Contexts at the University of South Queensland (USQ), using WebCT/ Blackboard. My memory of the course may be a bit sketchy since it is a while ago. These were the following issues I had with my course which subsequently lead to my withdrawal and losing a fair bit of my savings, since I was categorised as an international student:

- Relevance: I could not relate to the concepts and activities since it focused on online learning, mobile learning and experiences. I had none at this point since we only worked on print-based distance material and my knowledge of mobile learning was zero. There were also no plans for FIT to offer courses online at this time.
- Length of and navigating course page: The course page length was quite lengthy and I had to do a lot of scrolling to get to certain content or links. There were a multitude of pages and other links or downloads for the course. Even though, there was an orientation segment and Question and Answers forum, I found myself lost and frustrated at times, trying to navigate my way around the course.
- Connectivity: Internet was expensive, slow and unreliable in Fiji at the time. I also did not have internet at home so it was quite an inconvenience to leave the office at late hours. I had great trouble in uploading assignments which often stalled or took almost an hour. I had complained to the course lecturer but there was little they could do to assist.
- Work commitments: Around this period the Learning Centre was preparing to host a local TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) Conference at FIT. It meant it took up a lot of my time to assist in preparations for the Conference on top of my daily workload. This meant I had to put aside my studies.

However from my experience there were positives. I did get a better sense of how content is more available and accessible (after paying fees). There is certain etiquette to follow when posting a discussion. I did find that I was more confident in contributing to discussions compared to if it were a face-to-face scenario. Unfortunately I did not get to know my class mates.

So that is my first online experience with USQ. I have learnt a greater deal being an Education Technologist at the University of the South Pacific (USP) through on-going training and online development using Moodle.

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<sup>1</sup> ODL Unit and the Learning Centre were dissolved in 2008.