Identifying Learner Support Needs Through the Use of a Digital and Information Literacy Self-Assessment Framework

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Problem solving

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The previous two decades have seen New Zealand invest significant resources to shift from a dependence on agricultural products to becoming a knowledge-based economy. Within the education sector this is making important changes to the learning environment. It means ICT is playing a significant role in determining the ultimate success and on-going learning experience of learners. To ensure we address student needs and have high satisfaction, motivation and completion rates, in 2011 the Waikato Institute of Technology (Wintec) initiated a Student Technology Competency Project (STCP).

The project was driven by the philosophy that all students considering study at Wintec have the opportunity to become familiar with the institution's ICT environment. The project team developed a programme of instructional materials and face-to-face "how-to" sessions designed for basic use of applications (e.g. e-mail, Word), accessing the library databases, using the learning management system Moodle, and the student portal Mytec.

While feedback on the project was positive, a sustained review of the project using sections of the e-Learning Maturity Model (eMM, 2010) and discussions with the eMM model's author indicated that the programme needed to be readily available both for learners in the institution and prior to enrolment. It was also clear to the project team that a number of students needed to personalise their learning.

To address this, the team are developing a personalised learning plan approach based on three steps:
1. Firstly, the learner will interact with an intuitive user questionnaire. This questionnaire obtains from the learner background information on their current digital and information skills and competencies.
2. Secondly, the data gathered from the questionnaire creates for the learner a pictorial profile of their current capabilities. The profile is based on a "traffic light" concept — Green: good to go, Orange: may need to review skills, Red: need to address this.
3. The pictorial profile will be used to select from the courses offered by Wintec Learning Hub and the learner will then create a Personal Learning Plan appropriate to their identified needs.

This session will demonstrate the fully-functional self-assessment tool and illustrate how PLPs are generated. The ability for learners to create a Personal Learning Plan and to engage fully in institutional ICT requirements enhances learner competency and national investment.

References

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