Transforming Our e-Learning 'Worst Practices' into Excellent Teaching

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1997 (!)

Research:
Papers, books, talks...

Teaching:
Text, voice, a/synchronous

JELIS
I <3 LIS education!
BEST PRACTICES

Learner-led

Engaging

Rigorous

Interactive

Guide on the Side

Community
We know what we "should" do... but that still leaves a LOT of leeway for us to inflict horribleness on ourselves, our students, and our TAs (if we have them!).

And let's admit: we have all made mistakes. Really truly awful mistakes. And we know from our research that some of those mistakes get propagated to the point that they masquerade as "best practices." Let's explore WHY it happens and then some examples.
Why Bad Things Happen:

- Technology won't behave;
- Students have varying preferences;
- Institutional norms (or requirements);
- Instructor preferences and own educational experiences;
- Honest errors and "first tries";
- Overloads;
- Mentoring TAs
Systemic problems:
Underlying things that aren't specific to a CMS or a specific program

Theory/practice and the ways we've tried to "solve" it

Student as customer

Economy (more students!)
So let's tackle those 3 systemic problems as our first few 'worst practices' -- I'm going to reframe them:

**Downplaying the inherently interactive nature of theory and practice**

**Failing to achieve a balance between student-as-customer and student-as-product**

**Resorting to assembly-line instruction and group projects without sound underlying pedagogical rationale**
I have done some specific things -- let's stay as specific as possible! -- and you can think about some you have done too.

- Connect theory with practice in class & discussions
- Visit workplaces
- Have students build theory inductively from practice
- Make the students do the work
...which leads into the next part, because many 'worst practices' I have inadvertently demonstrated in my own teaching have come from not letting the students do the *meaningful* parts of the work.
group projects are bad*.
collaborative learning is good.
what to do???
well, don't do what I did...
WP1: Assessing the wrong thing
WP2 & 3: Failing to provide adequate scaffolding -- and its evil twin -- doing too much of the work yourself

Bibliography

My own mind was my source due to experience.
WP4 & 5: too much structure -- and its evil twin -- too little structure
WP6: Facilitating procrastination -- and allowing students to harm themselves in the process
WP7: Having students *write* about instead of *do*
WP8 & 9: Having students *watch* instead of *do* -- and its evil twin -- having students *do* without sufficient *modeling* first
I've shared some "worst practices"

both systemic and specific ones

and some solutions I've implemented.

I tried to share concrete solutions BUT

I don't expect that you can (necessarily) use them as-is (although you should feel free to do so if you want).

Rather, I hope you can take the WP and solution pairs as examples of concepts and expand, modify, and personalize them for use in your own teaching.
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