

Redesign of a Learning Activity using mLearning

By Barry Switnicki

Present Learning activity

I teach Executive coaching both Online and face to face (F2F) for a private college. The program is taught primarily to adults from a wide range of sectors and niches. It is taught globally in over 30 countries. When taught F2F in non-english speaking locations the course is taught through interpretation.

The activity subject area is what is called Coach Position. Coach position is the micro-skill that a Solution Focused Coach develops to be able to coach a client without making judgements, giving advice, hints, or nudges as to a direction or solution for the clients problem or goal. Incidentally I also believe this is a key component for a facilitator to master for effective learner centered teaching.

F2F this skill is presently taught primarily as a lecture activity although, I uniquely also use a small group breakout and presentation structure. Small groups of students will work together to answer questions, or comment on a number of statements, then presenting to their colleagues in a creative manner. The initial lecture component is about twenty minutes in length including questions and answers. The group activity takes approximately another sixty minutes. The only direct resources used are markers and flipcharts and the student manual.

When taught online there is an initial self study component, reading out of the manual before the class and reflecting on the content. During a synchronous class there is also a lecture, Socratic conversation, as well as a questions and answer period separate from the rest of the activity. Total time is approximately forty minutes in length. The synchronous class is done using Cisco Webex as a meeting and learning platform. There are a few Power Point slides and a whiteboard used for this activity and students have access to their manual.

New Coach Position Learning Activities Incorporating mLearning

(1) Pre-class activity

- Students would be asked to view at least two resources from a resource list and identify how Coach Position fit's into the concept of the Erickson Principles.
- The resources on the list would primarily be videos or screencasts of group presentations that other classes had done in the past (this is from Part B mLearning Activity). Initially this list would be quite short until enough classes had presented and video/screencasts manufactured to populate a comprehensive resource list and library.
- All video and screencasts would be mobile optimized and checked on various devices to ensure operation.
- Students would be encouraged to access resources when opportunities present themselves as they are mobile optimized.
- Video and screencasts would be posted to Youtube and Youku Tudou (China) for ease of viewing.

(2) Initial Class Activity (F2F or Synchronous Online)

There would be a short, ten minute, explanation of Coach Position and how it fits into a Solution Focused Coaching session. The next step would be the following two activities. With the students I teach it is assumed that each student would have some form of smart phone and/or a tablet. Students would be given 10-15 minutes in their small groups to go over the instructions, organize themselves, and figure out logistics.

Part A mLearning Activity (done outside of class)

- Students working in small groups.
- Each student will be asked to take a still or video image that represents coach position to them.
- Each student will share the image with other members of the group along with an explanation of how and why this artifact represents Coach Position for them. This explanation could be in a text, audio, video or other format that they can transmit to the group.
- This activity would be done over the course of a week and the instructor would be part of Whatsapp, Wechat, or facebook group they have created so work can be monitored. Instructor would also be available to help with technical logistics, such as creating groups on the appropriate app.

Part B mLearning Activity

- Once Part A has been completed, the group will be tasked with creating a presentation to be shared with the rest of the class. This presentation would be done in either a F2F class or a Synchronous Online class. They will have one week minimum to prepare outside of class and then 15 minutes in class to "tweak" their presentations.
- Each group would be given one or two questions or statements that they would build a presentation around.
- The focus of the presentation is to creatively convey their learning and awareness to the rest of the class. The focus is on creativity and fun rather than technical expertise. The group may use any medium or "vehicle" to creatively present as long as it will work in the class. For example it could be a narrative, skit, song, Power Point, Prezi, Word document or video.

It would be explained to the students that both these activities could be done from their mobile device if they wished. They would be given the option of communicating by either Whatsapp, Wechat (China) or Facebook and groups would be created in either of these applications for them if they did not have the technical expertise to do so themselves. If they wished to synchronously conference a group could be set up on Zoom or Skype. Any media could be transferred by email, Whatsapp or Facebook. Images, audio and video could be recorded using smart phones or tablets. If students were creating video for their presentation it could be uploaded to Youtube or Youku Tudou (China) for ease of distribution.

These activities align to Quinns 4 C's in the following manner:

Content

- Photos, audios and videos could be shared among the group using Whatsapp, Facebook, or email.
- These artifacts could also be shared real time, using the Zoom meeting platform or Skype video.

Capture

- Audio, video and images could be captured using smart phones and tablets.

Communicate

- Text communication would be by either Whatsapp, Wechat (China), email, or facebook.
- Real time audio / video communication would be achieved using Zoom meetings or Skype audio/video.

Compute

- The compute component would be limited to software that facilitated creating the presentations. My hunch would be that students would use laptop or desktops if creating Powerpoints, Prezis, Thinglinks, etc.
- Note: I found this area to be a bit challenging to fit into this assignment.

Advantages of Mobile infrastructure versus non-mobile

- Ability to capture and transmit images, still and moving, simply and seamlessly "in the moment".
- Ability to adapt applications to suit the culture and realities of the students. For example, students in China are restricted and unable to use Youtube and Facebook. There are other resources such as Wechat and Youku Tudou available to them. Whatsapp is a very popular application outside of North America and is used as an alternative to texting.
- As video and screen cast artifacts are created they will be in the language the students are conversant in. Therefore the resource list will be populated without having to utilize translation/editing services which is a significant cost savings.
- Students can meet much easier as they do not have to be in a stationary location with a desktop or laptop. They can be on the move or take a short break from regular activities to meet with their groups using their mobile devices. I find Zoom to be particularly mobile friendly especially in poorer cellular areas or areas with reduced bandwidth. Zoom has the capability to restrict or optimize resources being used, such as audio or text only.
- Although much of these activities could be done using Desktops/Laptops, the convenience of using a mobile device makes it a great alternative, especially given the busy, mobile life, of most of the students. In many parts of the world the smartphone and tablet is often the tool of choice, especially when traveling. Many of the F2F students are traveling to attend. In addition many of online students often attend class from multiple locations and the easier it is for them to connect with other students and do assignments while they are mobile, the greater the odds that this assignments will get done.

