Project One: Decision-Making Framework

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**Abstract**

I have chosen a situation in the higher education track because it is where I work and have many years of student experience. Access to higher education has evolved into a personal passion of mine. I enjoy exploring ways of making students more successful and helping them to complete their degrees. For these reasons, I chose to focus on a higher education situation.

This paper explores the decision-making model and framework for The College to decide on an LMS (Learning Management System) for their new Time Management course. Both the cost and student benefit are being considered. The decision-making model chosen for this situation is rational, cost-benefit analysis. The paper includes the needs analysis, decision-making strategies, and framework.

**Needs Analysis**

## *Background and Focus*

* The College is a higher educational school that serves working adults and offers an online, flexibly paced degree program. It has been observed, and the data also supports, that the majority of our students are starting the program below a proficient level in several “college readiness” skills. The College would like to begin offering an online, pre-course that students would complete before starting the program. Proposed modules include time management, academic writing overview, self-evaluation , etc. Because this will be a pre-course and will not count toward the students’ degree, The College carefully needs to consider the per student cost
* The College has requested a consultation on which LMS platform would be most cost effective and beneficial for both the College and the students.

## *Goals*

* To present options of platforms that The College can utilize to offer their pre-course on Time Management to their incoming students.
* To present the cost and benefits investment of each of the options
* To present one recommendation that is most cost effective and most aligns with the needs

## *Additional Considerations*

* There may need to be a trial period for students to try and give feedback
* There may need to be staff training in using a new LMS platform
* Students may need to be taught how to use the pre-course platform, that could potentially end up being different from their degree program LMS

## *Process*

* Key stakeholders and project team members to be involved and how:
  + Chief Executive – will approve of the final Needs Assessment and approve the recommendations
  + Chief Learning Architect – will supervise the Needs Assessment and review the recommendations
  + Head Curriculum Developer – will consult on how LMS will interact with competencies, content and modules for the pre- course
  + Head IT – will consult on technical features of the LMS options and system requirements
  + Student Success Manager – will help with getting student feedback, rolling out the surveys and communicating with students about the process
  + Data Analyst – will help in analyzing and interpreting the data

*Results*

The results of the Needs Analysis will be shared further on. The final should result in one recommended LMS that will be cost effective for The University and an effective way of learning Time Management skills for students before they start the degree program.

**Decision-making Strategies**

*Value Hierarchy*

The College’s mission is to provide the best student experience. Currently, The College is also interested in making this new degree program more cost efficient and sustainable. At the College, the students are always the first priority in all decision-making, therefore, they are the priority and at the top of the value hierarchy in this decision and the standard of benefit for the student will be the upmost priority. However, due to the current financial positioning of The College, the standard of cost also be included.

*Strategies for Decision-Making: Systemization*

Being that this decision is based on set choices, using a system of rational choice model will fit well. Since this decision considers both the benefit to students and the cost to The College, using the rational choice model type of cost-benefit analysis method will provide a systematic and analytic method to provide accuracy and efficiency in the process of comparing the benefits and costs of different LMS platforms (Jonassen, 2012). Both the intangible and tangible benefits and costs will be evaluated and recognized (Baker, Bridges, Hunter, Johnson, Krupa, & Murphy, 2001). Using this method, a set of LMS options will be identified and evaluated, the cost and benefit of each option will be rated and then one will be selected based on the lowest cost to The College and highest benefit to the student (Johnassen, 2012).

*Strategies for Decision-Making: Research Initiatives and Goal Setting*

Involved with this decision will be the ongoing research to evaluate it effectiveness for the students. A pilot group of students will first trial the new LMS and the feedback will be used before giving it to all new students. Within a couple months of implementation, a survey will be sent out and feedback from all students will be gathered.

In comparing this working-adult higher education environment to a younger, more elementary environment the research focus might be different. With younger students there could be more focus on whether there is any harm being done to the children. Also, in conducting research, parental consent may have to be gathered, which could bias the sample being used. Additionally, using a survey to ask for feedback may not be as effective with younger children. There may need to be other ways, such as some before-and-after evaluations, that can be used instead.

*Strategies for Decision-Making: Alternative Factors and Strategies*

The article *Theories and Strategies of Good Decision Making* (2012) focuses on how decision-making applies to Information Technology and Project management. It provides many examples for how decisions can be made. In these industries sometimes principles and algorithms can be used for decision-making output. For this particular situation in higher education, and algorithm may provide part of the answer related to the cost but may not be able provide the answer for the most benefit to the student, which is a priority for The College. This could also be applied to using an automated system to deliver an answer. This decision needs people to consider the impact to the student. For this reason, a group approach in which people from different parts of the student experience are brought together to analyze different alternatives that fit the goal would best be suited to this track. This would improve the decision-making and be most efficient in resource management. It would eliminate the back-and-forth for each option and include the scope of the whole student experience.

**Framework for Decision-making**

*Alignment to Established Decision-making models*

This framework is well aligned to the established rational choice model and type of cost-benefit analysis method (Jonassen, 2012). Cost-effectiveness begins with a clear goal and a set of alternatives for reaching that goal (State University, 2017) The goal is to find an LMS that is both cost-effective and beneficial to students. Comparisons between the different LMS platforms will be conducted. The alternatives with the largest effectiveness relative to cost and the additional factor of student effectiveness will be considered in evaluating each option.

This framework also relates to theories of instruction as it includes an overall objective, similar to a learning objective. This offers the means to choose the most appropriate learning decision or LMS and can help to select and organize decision activities and resources. In using a learning objective to focus the decision-making, the expected result will be a highly focused decision (Morrision, Ross, Kalman, Kemp, 2011).

*Adaptability*

This framework is very adaptable to any changing needs of The College or students. If The College wants to look at both cost and student benefit they can, or if they want to just focus on one or the other, that will work too. The decision-making model will gather information about many alternatives and this information can always be re-evaluated if another LMS needs to be chosen. Cost-effectiveness analysis adds tp the ability to consider the results of different alternatives relative to the costs of achieving the ideal results (State University, 2017)

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