LTS101 – Learning Contexts, Styles and Outcomes

OTS2 Reflection

The Observed Teaching Sessions consisted of a two hour lecture for a new Unit being taught within the Telecommunications Engineering degree. This Unit is about introducing students to a new Operating System that many will have never seen before, giving them the opportunity to expand their field of interest. As such most of the teaching is expository. The primary aim of the Lectures is to expose students to new information and to try to place it in a real-world context. The subject is further enhanced by tutorials – where ideas and system concepts are discussed in greater detail – and laboratories – where students are required to interact with and configure computer and network systems applications. The presented lecture concluded the topic of using Unix to simulate computer networks before moving onto setting up and using DHCP and DNS services. This second topic is due to be concluded in the final week of lectures.

Where possible (unfortunately not possible in simulating networks) I intersperse the lecture with attempts to solicit ideas and possible approaches from students as well as with live examples and configurations from real-remote computer systems – the DHCP/DNS configurations from my own home network were used as a sample. A ten minute break is scheduled to break up the long duration of a 2 hour lecture.

The actual teaching session went well, primarily:
1. As the semester has progressed it has gotten easier to get students to contribute to the lecture with ideas and questions, although some students remain quiet.
2. Demonstrations on real systems were useful and caused some students to ask questions

There is scope for improvement.
1. The lecture timing started well, the plans I made to progress through certain points of the material held up until twenty minutes into the second hour of the lecture. However, I then spent too much time on the next set of topics and ended up rushing through the last section. Timing is usually managed via a dry run prior to the lecture but this failed in the last half-hour. Suggestion in the post presentation review included keeping a sheet of notes with timestamps to help keep the lecture on time
2. As stated, the lecture was planned with presentation, class discussion and live demonstrations. Post-presentation review made suggestions to allow students to attack problems in small groups as a way to better break up the tedium of a two hour lecture. This is an interesting idea but may be difficult in a more formal lecture theatre environment. Nonetheless, now that the content for the Unit has been developed, more time can be spent refining the presentation techniques in its subsequent run
3. Also following the post-presentation review suggestions were offered to adopt a more formal style in emphasizing a review of previous work and an outline of this weeks material at the start of the lecture, followed by a summary of key points at the end of the lecture.