

Chapter 10

Models for Implementing Effective Online Learning

Laura Corbin Frazier

Mount St. Mary's University, USA

Barbara Martin Palmer

Mount St. Mary's University, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter provides a description of five models for professional development (PD) for online instruction and analyzes each model according to domains of effective online instruction (i.e., faculty stance, student self-regulation, faculty support, authentic practice, engagement, community development, and cognitive demand). Additionally, a decision model is provided for K-12 and university administrators, teacher educators, and policymakers to guide strategic decision making in the determination of a model for PD best suited to the needs and resources of their institution.

INTRODUCTION

In the first edition of this book, we described our small liberal arts university and its commitment to teaching and learning in community. That commitment remains. With a student–faculty ratio of 14:1, close interpersonal connections are highly valued. Many faculty members employ the Socratic teaching method and host seminar-style courses or rearrange classroom furniture to foster discussion and allow for student collaboration. Initially, faculty demonstrated deeply held beliefs about learning that is socially constructed in a physical setting (i.e., a traditional classroom). Thus, the challenge we presented was how to transfer our educational philosophy into an online environment and maintain high levels of interactivity, engagement, and close relationships with our students. Since that time, our university has adopted a new learning management system (LMS) that enables interactivity and supports synchronous coursework through video conferencing. Our new challenge is to identify best practices for faculty development and to encourage technological and pedagogical change.

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Models for Implementing Effective Online Learning

Both authors are members of the Education Department, which was an early adopter of online learning, offering some of the university's first online courses. In addition to new technological innovations, our university hired a Chief Transformation Officer. This individual recognized the prominent role an Education Department, especially one already moving forward with online learning, could play in technological and pedagogical change at the university level. The following paragraphs describe our online journey from where our original chapter left off to where we are today.

In January of 2016 our university engaged in a "pilot" semester with six faculty members using the LMS that the university was considering for purchase. Instructor and student feedback was favorable, indicating greater satisfaction than with the existing LMS due to its interactivity and ability to support synchronous communication online. The pilot continued into the summer semester and additional faculty were invited to use the LMS in the fall. Again, feedback was positive. In December, our university made the decision to move to the new LMS. As the last transition between LMSs several years prior was forced and rushed with much faculty anxiety and displeasure, it was decided that this transition would be slow. Faculty were notified of the upcoming change and invited to use the new LMS or to remain with the existing one in both spring and fall of 2017. The old LMS would be disabled for the start of the 2018 calendar year. In addition to this purchasing and implementation decision, the university hired its first instructional technologist. This individual became the administrator of the new LMS and provided technical support to faculty. A part-time graduate assistant was also hired to provide faculty support, maintaining regular office hours in our library.

In Spring 2017, a training course for faculty was developed by members of the Education Department. The course included four two-hour sessions offered weekly for a month. Three offerings of the course occurred before the end of the spring semester and three additional offerings occurred in the summer in a modified two-day format (four hours per day). Participants met in person for the first three sessions of the course and synchronously online using the LMS for the last session. Participation in these courses was incentivized by offering faculty the first option on an upgraded laptop or tablet with a peripheral monitor.

A course website was developed in the new LMS and organized in modules of content including vision for online learning, building community, getting started with course development, effective practices, and assessment. The course was designed to support faculty who wanted to use the new LMS in web-facilitated, hybrid, or fully-online settings. Each module included hands-on activities where faculty assumed student roles in instructional activities followed by pedagogical discussion on the instructional decision-making required by an instructor, and technological guidance on using the LMS. Emphasized in each session was that faculty could move toward integration of the LMS and its features at their own pace. The Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, and Redefinition (SAMR) model (Puentedura, 2006; Puentedura, 2013) was highlighted to reinforce this freedom. At that time, the only faculty requirement was to post syllabi on course sites in the LMS just as had been required with the former LMS. Each module also included pedagogical resources for faculty reflection and scholarly research articles to help validate the practices and discussions held. This course has continued to be offered three times a semester and twice in the summer. Though attendance is no longer incentivized, both full-time and adjunct faculty continue to participate.

In the summer of 2018 a Center for Instructional Design and Delivery (CIDD) was created and the faculty member leading the faculty development course was named the director. A classroom was renovated to include enhanced technologies such as 80" dual displays on two walls of the room for remote videoconferencing using Zoom, glass whiteboards, and model STEM classroom resources for the Education Department. This room is the home of the CIDD and where faculty development often occurs. Also

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