Chapter 29
Strategies for Effective Online Teaching and Learning:
Practices and Techniques With a Proven Track of Success in Online Education

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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides readers with a comprehensive review of strategies for effective design in online instruction. The authors explore the traditional debate between advocates and critics of online education and discuss effectiveness in retention, engagement, and overall academic performance. The chapter differentiates between "online-first" course design and emergency remote delivery, as experienced in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Key factors include identifying engagement and communication strategies such as "ask me anything" sessions and tailored selection of resources. Open educational resources (OER), pre-recorded lectures, podcasts, and "online-first" textbooks are presented as appropriate and cost-conscious content options. Also included are alternative assessment ideas and universal design for learning (UDL) and accessibility guidelines. The chapter provides a continuum model for the transition of in-person courses to online instruction while conscious of both instructor workload/ instructional support and expected level of learner workload and engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Adoption of online teaching and learning has increased in in recent years. From early timid experiments using a hybrid format to fully-fledged online offerings, institutions and learners have come to recognize the possibilities of this Mode of Instruction (MoI) as a catalyst to democratize access to education. Online is now seen as a more inclusive MoI that aligns with contemporary living standards and that can be a more suitable solution for learners who need to balance work obligations and family commitments while skilling, reskilling, and upskilling to improve their career perspectives.

While online teaching and learning made significant inroads into the mainstream between 2010 and 2020, it remained a steady second to on-ground formats. This situation changed drastically in March 2020 with the sudden change to remote instruction necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to public health restrictions imposed by governments, educational institutions across the world were required to close campuses and deliver instruction through whatever remote means they had available (Moralista & Oducado, 2020). For some institutions, the situation meant a shift to an online learning environment that was already supporting their face-to-face instruction, while for others, it was more of an emergency intervention. In addition to technical considerations, teaching faculty were at various levels of skill in teaching remotely or online. The reality for most institutions was a diverse range of learner preparedness and learning preferences, institutional culture and support, and the ability of teaching staff to upskill for the design and implementation of online teaching strategies.

In this sense, online teaching and learning became front and center in the strategic response to COVID-19 as institutions scrambled to create continuity for learners and consistency in helping them achieve their goals. As a natural reaction, strategies for effective online teaching and learning have had an unprecedented opportunity to evolve in support of this massive increase in demand. A new generation of instructors now sees online with renewed interest, and content areas that disregarded this MoI in the past now recognize it as a suitable alternative. This chapter will delve into the most effective strategies in online teaching and explore how they factor into the success of online instruction.

BACKGROUND

Proponents and critics of online teaching and learning (Schwerdt et al., 2010) have long debated its effectiveness and appropriateness compared with traditional on-ground settings for a range of disciplines. The intense debate has created significant division among faculty members and academic administrations, with battle lines also drawn among learners (Palvia et al., 2018). Some of the more contentious points gravitate around questions like:

- Do learners have access to real-time support and feedback from teaching staff?
- Is there a comparable level of institutional support for all actors?
- Can learners create connections between new and prior knowledge without formal supervision?
- Can learners successfully engage in learning activities in an individual capacity and as part of a group?
- Can we trust that learners will uphold academic integrity policies in an unsupervised environment?

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