Chapter 8
Developing Teaching Presence in Online Learning Through Shared Stakeholder Responsibility

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ABSTRACT

Transitioning from a face-to-face teaching environment to online teaching requires a shift in paradigm by stakeholders involved (i.e., instructors and students). This chapter provides an extensive literature review to help novice online instructors understand the nature of online teaching presence to help position their students towards more active participation. Premised on the Community of Inquiry framework (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000) and constructivism, we highlight a conceptual framework of four iterative processes for developing online teaching presence: preparations for facilitation, designing the facilitation, implementing the facilitation, and assessing the facilitation. Based on this framework, strategies are articulated for overcoming the challenges of online learning through shared stakeholder responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

Online learning is a contemporary learning environment common in post-secondary education (Allen & Seaman, 2013). It requires that at least 80 percent of a course is transacted through an online medium such as a learning management system (Allen & Seaman, 2008).

Various factors contribute to a successful online learning environment. From the perspective of the Community of Inquiry framework (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000), three important components are required to develop effective and constructivist online learning environments: social presence,

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cognitive presence, and teaching presence. Of the three presences, the teaching presence component is described as "thoughtful, focused and attentive" (Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, & Fung, 2010, p. 32), and integral in interlinking student learning needs through the development and maintenance of social and cognitive processes (Garrison, 2011).

Garrison (2011) notes that "[t]eaching presence represents perhaps a greater challenge in an e-learning environment" (p. 25) because of its importance for learning outcomes. As we focus on understanding the elements that comprise teaching presence, it is important to identify the stakeholders involved: in addition to the instructor, online students also have a role in teaching presence (Redmond & Lock, 2006).

Through the lens of social constructivism, this chapter aims to outline how instructors and students collaborate effectively to build and maintain online teaching presence. The chapter identifies four distinct iterative processes involved in the development of online teaching presence: preparation for facilitation, designing the facilitation, implementing the facilitation, and assessing the facilitation. These components promote meaningful collaboration between instructors and students and, taken together, describe the innovative learning practices necessary to develop and maintain teaching presence in the online learning environment The chapter concludes with a proposed conceptual framework to better articulate the functions that occur within teaching presence.

BACKGROUND

As in the traditional classroom, a variety of online instructional methods exist for today's online instructor. Design options range from student focus to teacher focus and subject focus to teaching focus, with many benefits available from these varieties of choice. To reach the desired learning outcomes, however, the online instructor must initially identify the main objectives of his or her course and then locate an appropriate design approach that will be effective in connecting the student to meaningful learning opportunities.

The constructivist approach, as developed by Vygotsky (1978), Bandura (1981, 1993), and elaborated furthered for educational technology by Jonassen (1992, 1999), is the lens through which learning will be viewed in this chapter. This implies that with the incorporation of digital technologies, students benefit by experiencing their learning first-hand through action. They continue to build upon their active mental, physical, and emotional constructs by seeking resolution or solution through a project or problem inquiry.

The inclusion of constructivism in the teaching approach focuses on the aspect of "authenticity" (Jonassen, Davidson, Collins, Campbell, & Haag, 1995, p. 21) and personalized learning for the student; when combined with educational technology, constructivism focuses attention on the building of knowledge by way of students interacting with their learning. Jonassen et al. suggested further that the inclusion of such technology integration decreased teacher involvement from 80 percent to 10–15 percent as students are able to spend more time interacting with their own learning. The increased time spent on their own learning signals a paradigm shift, giving the learner more opportunity to focus on constructing their knowledge more independently. Accordingly, effective online instructional design is necessary.

In an online course framework, a constructivist paradigm posits that students should have opportunity to create, analyze, and apply their learning in a manner that connects to the higher-level learning constructs described in the revised Bloom's taxonomy for learning (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).