

Chapter 3

Converting Traditional Learning to Online Environments

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ABSTRACT

Teaching and learning are transitioning from traditional classroom-based approaches to computer-based learning environments. The demand for technology innovations generate from the new student generation who was born into a technology-driven era termed digital natives. While a large majority of current teachers come from a less technical generation termed digital immigrants. A teacher cannot reap the benefits of online teaching approaches if they are not trained on how to convert traditional methods to online learning and do not understand the available technologies. This chapter covers e-learning paradigms, e-tools, and e-assessments for converting traditional approaches to online environments.

INTRODUCTION

Uncertainty over where a technology-centered educational system will lead people may account for the many approaches to converting proven traditional methods into online environments. As some conventional approaches to teaching become obsolete and education increasingly relies on the digital realm, the roles of students and teachers are changing accordingly. The ongoing debate that online learning is *not* as effective as traditional education stems from the lack of face-to-face interaction. As some students may feel disconnected from online learning, the conversion of traditional to online methods can fill that void. Several studies indicated that the elements that are diminished from traditional learning could be compensated or paralleled by similar activities in online environments (Picciano, 2002). This chapter explores the conversion to online learning and its assessments. While creating and deploying an assessment suite, overlapping factors must be well balanced in a manner that addresses the fast pace of technology innovations and simultaneously adhering to the student's needs. The stakeholders may include but not limited to departmental leaders, curriculum developers, practitioners, and administrators seeking to identify the benefits of online instructional technology as the centerpiece of teaching and learning.

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Online learning can be web-assisted or hybrid (combining a traditional classroom format and online environment). By developing online strategies enables institutions and teachers to provide efficient, practical, unique, and alternative means of converting traditional learning assessments for use with online learning. The assessment process may include digital approaches of the diagnostic analysis, student tracking, and rubric through project-based learning which is crucial to the teaching and learning process.

Historically educational systems played a significant role in society and the economy. Graduates contribute to the economy by entering the workforce with innovative ideas. With the student in mind, educational systems must understand the student's needs and the economy demands then adopt a learning pedagogy that provides flexible learning that produces the highest outcomes over a diverse student body, applying assessments to implement new learning strategies. The learning strategies must encourage a growing knowledge base across all sectors of society (Collis & Wende, 2002). The evolution of learning paradigms has played a part in establishing teaching and learning methods by sharing the best practices in society. More specifically, the academic changes of the late 20th century through the early 21st century was global and extensive affecting institutions and different populations than ever before (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

LEARNING PARADIGM

An increase in student diversity often challenges teaching. The change is due to increased enrollment by international students in the United States, for instance. International students' needs include several things that differ from those of American students: e.g., cultural adaptation, language barriers, and social support networks and so on. Ethnic diversity raises concerns as this may be a new experience to the traditional teacher. Biggs and Tang (2011) stated: "When the teacher focuses on the learning activities, ethnic differences are appropriately minimized as far as learning itself is concerned" (p. 5). In addition to diversity, another concern are the academic orientation and student commitment to maintain standards when the level of commitment ranges within a group of students to the extent that it presents an interesting teaching challenge (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Generally, there are two distinct types of students:

- **Self-Learners:** Academically committed, interested in the studies, want to excel, have a clear career path, and ask questions to develop a concept as it pertains to personal significance.
- **Job Seekers:** Generally, do not have a sound background of prior knowledge needed to excel in the course nor divulged in commitment, often do not ask questions and producing just enough effort to pass the course, to become employable.

The difference between these two types of learners is that if both types of learners hear the same lecture, the self-learner will acknowledge keystones while the job seeker may view essential points to remember to pass the exam. Job seekers is the majority within the student body in the modern era as they need additional assistance to reach the objectives. Both types of learners will respond differently to the same educational content. Teachers must not assume that their teaching methodology has worked because self-learners earned high scores; in fact, the learning outcomes may not be correlated with how the course was instructed. A well-developed curriculum or lesson plan can lessen the gap between both types of learners using the following four factors:

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