

## Chapter XI

# Toward Effective Instruction in E-Learning Environments

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### Abstract

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*This chapter explores the role of instructors and the perspectives they bring to teaching in e-learning environments. It suggests that when instructors are developing e-learning courses, instruction is more effective if individual perspectives on teaching, as well as the principles of good teaching, are taken into consideration. Congruence between principles, perspectives, and practice enhance e-learning pedagogy. The model—reflect on the teaching approach, apply the principles of good teaching throughout the course, choose appropriate learning outcomes and activities, and review choices—is proposed as a guideline for effective teaching in e-learning environments.*

## Introduction

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As postsecondary institutions face the challenges of the learning society, educators and researchers have called for a change in the teaching paradigm of higher education. Thus, the discussion on e-learning in higher education presented in this chapter focuses on a learning paradigm rather than an instruction paradigm. To facilitate the transition to a learning paradigm, instructors must be supported as they experiment with new models of teaching and learning. This chapter presents a synthesis of major issues discussed in the literature on the transition from face-to-face teaching to e-learning with a focus on instructors and their roles in e-learning.

Bates (2000) highlights three main factors driving the need for changes in higher education. The first is the reality that universities are constantly being asked by government to do more with less. The second is the change in what citizens of the twenty-first century must know, given the emphasis on critical thinking, problem solving, and learning how to learn. And finally, Bates underlines the ubiquitous influence of new technologies on learning.

The primary purpose of the chapter, then, is to help instructors adapt more effectively to an e-learning environment. Individuals will have an opportunity to review their personal teaching styles and to explore teaching methods and pedagogy effective in e-learning environments. Key categories of activities in e-learning environments will be discussed, and a synthesis of e-learner needs and expectations will be offered.

The model proposed in this chapter is *reflect, apply, choose, review*, which is depicted in Figure 1.

The initial phase involves reflections by e-instructors on their personal perspectives on teaching. This is addressed in the section “Exploring Instructors’ Teaching Styles.” The next phase examines how to apply principles of good teaching in the e-learning environment. A third phase involves choosing e-learning activities appropriate to a particular e-learning course. These two stages are explored in the section “Effective Principles and Activities in E-Learning Environments.” The final phase of this model involves reviewing choices made from the viewpoint of e-learners. This is addressed in the section on “E-Learners in the Online Environment.”

It should be noted that there are a multitude of factors that influence the transition to e-learning, including institutional commitment to the transition; professional development for faculty making the shift to e-learning; an instructional design team to support e-course design; and technical support throughout the design, delivery, and evaluation of e-learning courses. However, this chapter focuses on those factors related to instructor beliefs and behaviors in the shift to e-learning.

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