



Chapter 36

Emerging Instructional Design and Strategies for Online Courses

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ABSTRACT

Due to rapid advancement in technology, massive changes have occurred in the educational context. Hence, educational institutions need to reshape their roles and responsibilities according to the new and innovative instructional technologies and approaches for meeting the goals of the digital era by building a digital teaching-learning culture. At this point, the major aspect is the learner, who is at the center of a teaching and learning process, which relies upon instructional design and strategies to deliver the content, and who will become the employee of the future workforce. Therefore, the design and delivery of instruction through innovative instructional strategies based on emerging learning theories are of the utmost importance. This chapter discusses the changing nature of digital teaching and learning from the perspective of delivering content and learning experiences through the effective orchestration of instructional design and strategies that are based on existing and emerging learning theories.

INTRODUCTION

Living in a digital age, people are surrounded by technology which changes and somehow continually shapes their lives from different aspects. Technological advancement never seems to slow down and is leading to massive changes in the era of education in terms of the ways that teaching and learning occur. Educational institutions need to rethink their roles and responsibilities according to the new and

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innovative instructional technologies in order to fulfil the premise of the digital era. Building a digital teaching-learning culture consists of many aspects that are necessary to ensure that university graduates are ready to join the 21st century workforce. At this point, the major aspect is the learner, who is at the center of a teaching and learning process, which relies upon instructional design and strategies to deliver the content. Hence, designing instruction for online courses, delivering that instruction effectively, and implementing innovative instructional strategies, methods and techniques based on emerging learning theories are of the utmost importance.

Changing Nature of Online Teaching and Learners

Previous studies early in the era of online learning focused more on the comparison of face-to-face and online learning environments. Comparisons of the effectiveness of these two different approaches has been proven to have ‘no significant difference’ for some decades now (Nguyen, 2015; Russell, 2001). More recent studies have shown these two methods might be even more powerful when applied hand-in-hand, which ended up with the ‘blended learning’ approach. Furthermore, various learning theories, instructional design strategies and assessment approaches have emerged during the exploration of online learning in search of greater teaching and learning effectiveness. It has become clear that not only has the technological support, pedagogical approaches, and the nature of the content, design and evaluation issues evolved, but also that the learners themselves, who are central to the whole process, have changed considerably from different aspects. Learners have become more digitally literate, using technology effectively for both academic and social purposes. Exposed to many distractors, students have found different ways to maintain focus and even to learn rapid multi-tasking that enables them to provide fast responses. They have started to watch and learn by doing, rather than just listening or reading, which means having a preference for visual and kinesthetic learning rather than learning through text. Students have improved in their collaborative learning by being more social than ever with the support of various social media, and also by being actively engaged in the learning process (Gülbahar, Rapp, Kilis, & Sitnikova, 2017). Hence, online learners are expected to form a community of inquiry (CoI), to interact with the content, as well as with other learners and the instructor, and to show presence in terms of social, cognitive and teaching aspects (Garrison, 2007).

Revealing online presence or participation is based on the digital records of learners’ interactions. Kim and Ketenci (2019) characterized the participation of online learners from three perspectives, ranging from the most to the least engaged as: a) Full participants, who contribute to building a community of interest by showing high interaction patterns; b) Inbound participants, who appear to be more active in group discussions by posing questions and providing meaningful feedback; and c) Peripheral participants, who partially collaborate or even remain inactive in group discussions. This is also similar for the face-to-face classroom environment, where certain students participate more than others, and points to the negligible effect of tools and technology and more to the instructional design, content and to the instructors themselves. Although the characteristics of learners changes according to the tools and content to which they are exposed, there is no empirical evidence that their preferred way to access information affects their learning outcomes either way. However, such observations have led to the emergence of various learning approaches which are expected to increase the performance and retention rates of learners.

Thus, based on various assumptions, different approaches to learning have developed over time. Valuing individual differences and the changing preferences of learners, ‘personalization’ and ‘adaptive instruction’ concepts have emerged. Realizing that learners are online most of the time and using

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