Chapter 37

Surviving Learning and Teaching Online:
Using High-Impact Practices to Enhance Instructional Strategies

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ABSTRACT

The incorporation of high-impact teaching and learning practices with online students can be a rewarding experience. In this personal narrative, a comparison between online and face-to-face instructional practices is documented. This chapter illustrates that online instruction can be just as satisfying to an instructor as any other type of delivery model. The outcomes and implications are different, and the former experience has a more impactful outcome than the latter. This narrative supports the value of using high-impact teaching and learning practices to enhance instructional strategies, especially online.

INTRODUCTION

I started my online teaching career over seven years ago. I was a bit skeptical about entering this new vista of teaching. Naturally, I would have some reservations as I have been teaching face-to-face for over a decade. With urging from my colleagues who had more experience with online instruction, I took the plunge.

I first volunteered to teach one online course in a graduate educational leadership program. I told myself that it was only a test. If I did well, I would continue to teach one course each semester, if I did not perform well, I would stick to the more familiar classroom instruction.

Surprisingly, many of my students in this graduate course had enrolled in a 100% online course before and they were very comfortable with the teaching and instructional application of the online course process. I let them know upfront, in the message from the instructor, that this was my first online course and that I might have a few missteps along the way. Being open and honest with the students was

the best thing that I could have done. Their responses were encouraging and supportive. I even had a student who works as an online course coordinator at her college volunteer to assist me, when needed, with structuring my course and bailing me out when I encountered problems that I did not know how to overcome. The first semester was successful. I vowed that I would learn as much as I could about this instructional delivery system and become proficient as an online instructor.

During the summer, I enrolled in an eight-week faculty online development and teaching seminar. The seminar replicated what students experienced when taking a course online and it gave the faculty participants valuable tools to use in their course development. I was assigned a resource person to assist me with learning new techniques that I could incorporate into my course development and support my practice in ways to assess learning outcomes. The resource person was very patient with me and extremely talented. To this day, I contact her when I want to add dazzle to my online courses. She has always been there to assist me.

I was exposed to a tremendous number of books and articles during that seminar. *Teaching Online: A Practical Guide* (Ko & Rossen, 2004) was particularly helpful. This book provides a survey of great tips for working with online course development, but more than that, the authors introduce online teaching skills, training, and support regarding the entire online course environment. The book is written in language that I can understand and it provides examples and illustrations that make sense. I still use this book as a handy resource and reference book.

I was provided with resourse from other online experts though the weekly seminar and I was exposed to other valuable books and videos. The first of these was Boettcher and Conrad (2010) *The Online Teaching Survival Guide: Simple and Practical Pedagogical Tips*. This book gave me a big picture of what the online course environment involved. The authors outline a practical and valuable roadmap for online teaching to help faculty like me to overcome the initial intimidation and uncertainty. The tips that were presented helped to familiarize faculty with both teaching pedagogy and technology.

In the beginning, the technology aspect was a sticking point for me. I required hours of support with getting the technology in sync with the course design. For example, if I wanted to introduce a video and have the students to critique the video, thus I had to learn how to put this idea into practice. When I uploaded the video, my concern was finding the right module to allow the students to upload their critique. Using the tips from Boettcher and Conrad helped me tremendously; I learned how to integrate the online pedagogy with the technology. Consequently, my online teaching experience became less frustrating and more satisfying for me. Moreover, I began receiving fewer complaints and more praise from students. I finally realized that one aspect of teaching online required the implementation of the learning experience—the pedagogical role in teaching and the design competencies such as live classroom chats, blogs, collaborative group learning, and other web applications.

I didn't stop with just these resources. Another book that was presented as part of the seminar that I also found to be helpful was *Adding Some Tec-Variety: 100 Plus Activities for Motivating and Retaining Learners Online,* by Curtis J. Bonk and Elaine Khoo (2014). Bingo! This book provided me with the resources that I had been looking for. It introduced new activities that I could incorporate into my online classroom that would give the students exciting, creative, and unique learning exposures. These tips are relevant and rigorous, and they bring new insight into the world of online teaching and learning. These activities enhance what I am introducing to my students, and the resources have helped me to improve the experience and learning outcomes of the students.

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