


Chapter 7

The Three E's of Pedagogical Effectiveness for Online Asynchronous Learning: Engagement, Equitability, and Examinations

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ABSTRACT

In an era where education is rapidly transitioning to online platforms, equity and inclusion must be considered when designing courses. Instructors must think critically about the content, materials, and assessments presented in their online courses. This chapter explores the interconnections of social justice education in an online, asynchronous learning environment. Based on the authors' instructional experience and observations, they propose a guiding model for asynchronous learning about social justice grounded in UDL guidelines, the three E's: engagement, equitability, and examinations. They conclude with recommendations for practice and future research specific in developing online social justice courses.

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The Three E's of Pedagogical Effectiveness

Distance learning, where the student and teacher are physically separate, is nothing new (Kentnor, 2015). From correspondence to radio to television, distance learning has provided a new method of delivery for educators to communicate, engage, and assess students. With technological advances and a rapidly shifting landscape, online education has become a norm for students in postsecondary settings (Legon & Garrett, 2017,). While there are many definitions for online learning and e-learning, many describe online learning where access to learning is through technology, most notably web-based (Moore Dickson-Deane, & Gaylen, 2011).

In fall 2010, 6.1 million students (29%) of students were enrolled in an online course (Kentnor, 2015). Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, in the fall of 2020, the number surged to 14.2 million (75%) of enrolled students taking at least one online course, with 44% of enrolled students exclusively in online distance education. A year later, the number dropped, though remains steady (11.2 million or 60% of students enrolled took at least one online course) (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2022). While COVID-19 clearly facilitated the rapid increase in online education, its effects have remained, thus forcing institutions to carefully consider the frequency and depth of online offerings to students.

As courses continue to shift to an online setting, educators face decisions in course design to deliver a curriculum that engages students while meeting the course learning objectives. While instructional design models exist, educators use their experience in face-to-face courses to design online-courses (Baldwin, Ching, & Friesen, 2018). As they consider reading material, content provided, media types, and assessments, the method of delivery will be at the forefront. Online courses present the opportunity for educators to offer their courses either synchronously or asynchronously.

SYNCHRONOUS AND ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

With synchronous learning, a virtual classroom is provided in which learning and teaching are occurring simultaneously (Hrastinski, 2008; Mick & Middlebrook, 2015). That is to say, students and instructors are required to be online at the same day and time. Using a variety of tools such as voice or video, synchronous courses offer a collaborative environment that allows multiple students to join instruction. On the other hand, asynchronous learning allows students to “learn on their own schedule.” Instructors typically upload instruction and content to a learning management system and students access material at different times (Hrastinski, 2008; Mick & Middlebrook, 2015). With structured flexibility, students can be online at different times to complete coursework.

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