Chapter 2
The Nuts and Bolts of Online Course Planning

Ron Lombard
Chatham University, USA

ABSTRACT

Materials presented deal with major aspects of planning an effective online course that can create an environment which will serve as a learning community. A review of misassumptions often made about online courses provides an introduction to the steps required make online courses effective. Issues covered include the knowledge and skills required from the instructor and participants for success in learning and instruction. The types of assignments and the importance of effective instructor feedback and instructor visibility are examined in relation to course construction. Effective assessment techniques for online courses are also examined in the context of the knowledge and skills participants in such courses should display. The major thrust of the presented materials is the understanding that as presentation techniques change assessment techniques need change to be effective.

INTRODUCTION

During the 2005-2006 school year over 500,000 K-12 students participated in an online course and more than one-third of public school districts offered virtual learning opportunities (Powell & Patrick, 2006). With this continued and increasing growth in virtual learning comes a need for qualified teachers who are effective in a virtual environment (Kyong & Bonk).Institutions of higher education have increasingly embraced online education, and the number of students enrolled in distance programs is rapidly rising in colleges and universities throughout the United States. In response to these changes in enrollment demands, many states, institutions, and organizations have been working on strategic plans to implement online education. At the same time, misconceptions and myths related to the difficulty of teaching and learning online, technologies available to support online instruction, the support and compensation needed for high-quality instructors, and the needs of online students create challenges

for the creators of vision statements and planning documents.

In 2004 a research firm (Edu-ventures) released a report that put the number of students enrolled in online courses at close to one million, doubling the number from just two years earlier. The report predicts another 500,000 or more students will enroll in online courses over the next two years. The company estimates that by the end of 2008, students enrolled in courses entirely online will constitute more than 15 percent of the total number of students enrolled at degree-granting institutions in the United States (Carnevale, 2005). Sloan consortium reported in 2006 that 53.6% of surveyed colleges and universities see online courses as major part of plan for future. That future is now. The need for the development of online courses and the need for educators to employ skills in applying technology and producing effective online courses must be reviewed (Oblinger & Hawkins, 2005).

It is based on this level of growth and the need for creating effective online course that this chapter presents a basic guide to aid instructors of online courses to deal with issues and problems that arise. Having created and taught online courses for the past seven years the writer offers knowledge learned from mistakes made and insights of lessons learned. This chapter presents insights and suggestions dealing with aspects of the formation, administration, assessment and suggestions for online courses. The goal is the creation of a guide for online courses that function as real communities of learning in which both the students and instructor are highly engaged in the learning process. Emphasis is placed on the nuts and bolts of course planning and activities with suggestions that will aid instructors in setting up their own online courses.

Background

The organization of this chapter will explore misassumptions about online courses, what the instructor needs to know, and what skills and knowledge students need to have for success in such a learning environment. In the context of course administration the materials will review traditional tools for effective course presentation and new tools that will enhance all aspects of the course. There are a number of misassumptions about online courses that provide a guide to viewing what makes courses effective and presents materials in an organized manner that need to be reviewed. The role of the instructor in course construction and presentation in the context of visibility, understanding of and dealing effectively with student problems, both leading to the creation of a positive community of learning needs to be examined. Likewise, the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and technological abilities of class participants must be reviewed to create a framework for a course compatible to participants' individual needs and learning styles. The issue of effective assessment modalities is also reviewed in the context of online courses. These are the areas that serve as the nuts and bolts in the creation and holding together of online courses. Each factor must be considered so the correct nuts and bolts are selected for the creation and maintaining of an effective online course.

Misassumptions about Online Courses

There are a number of major misassumptions about online courses to review prior to considering methods to enhance courses, since these misassumptions impact on the major views of the value of online courses. One misassumption is that online courses are easier and require less time and effort than traditional courses. Research related to online courses suggest that nothing could be further from the truth. In many cases it requires more time to complete aspects of online courses and students on the average should be willing and able to commit to four to fifteen hours per week per course. Potential online students and

14 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/nuts-bolts-online-course-planning/44352

Related Content

The Appropriateness of Scratch and App Inventor as Educational Environments for Teaching Introductory Programming in Primary and Secondary Education
Stamatios Papadakis, Michail Kalogiannakis, Vasileios Orfanakisand Nicholas Zaranis (2017). *International Journal of Web-Based Learning and Teaching Technologies (pp. 58-77).*
www.irma-international.org/article/the-appropriateness-of-scratch-and-app-inventor-as-educational-environments-for-teaching-introductory-programming-in-primary-and-secondary-education/187151

Online Learning System in Higher Education Institutions in Pakistan: Investigating Problems Faced by Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic
Farhana Tabassum, Nazia Akramand Muhammad Moazzam (2022). *International Journal of Web-Based Learning and Teaching Technologies (pp. 1-15).*
www.irma-international.org/article/online-learning-system-in-higher-education-institutions-in-pakistan/281235

Instructor Perceptions of Web Technology Feature and Instructional Task Fit
Troy J. Strader, Diana Reed, Inchul Suhand Joyce W. Njoroge (2015). *International Journal of Web-Based Learning and Teaching Technologies (pp. 52-65).*
www.irma-international.org/article/instructor-perceptions-of-web-technology-feature-and-instructional-task-fit/126933

Enhancing Pedagogy with mLearning
Damon Thomas, Angela Thomasand Andrew Fluck (2012). *Technologies for Enhancing Pedagogy, Engagement and Empowerment in Education: Creating Learning-Friendly Environments (pp. 1-14).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/enhancing-pedagogy-mlearning/57999

The Use of Google Apps to Support Teaching and Learning: A UAE Case Study
Fawzi Fayez Ishtaiwa-Dweikatand Ibtehal M. Aburezeq (2016). *International Journal of Web-Based Learning and Teaching Technologies (pp. 1-21).*
www.irma-international.org/article/the-use-of-google-apps-to-support-teaching-and-learning/168544