



Assuring Quality in Online Education: Practices and Processes at the Teaching, Resource, and Program Levels

Shattuck, Kay, ed.
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Book Review

Tags: online course design | online education | online teaching

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This volume engages current debates on establishing or maintaining quality online education, instructional practices, and educational innovation. The book is divided into four parts: (1) five essays on “overview and implications of practices and processes for assuring quality,” (2) six essays on “quality assurance and continuous improvement at the course design and teaching levels,” (3) six essays on “processes for assuring quality at resource and program levels,” and (4) two essays of “final thoughts.”

Thirty-nine education practitioners wrote either single-authored or multi-authored essays for this collection of nineteen articles. Some of them direct online education, quality control, or program assessment. A few others serve in K-12 online learning programs. A couple of contributors hold communications or marketing appointments. Nearly all hold administrative educational leadership or are academic researchers or professors. Many of the authors work at institutions of higher learning located in Pennsylvania. Others teach at institutions located in Colorado, Illinois, Maryland, Pittsburgh, Virginia, West Virginia, Washington DC, and British Columbia.

On the book’s coverage of topics, I expected to find and found, pieces about improving course design, determining effectiveness and faculty development, and reviewing culturally diverse student populations. Significant online education concerns are addressed in stand-alone essays: ethics, academic advising, learning analytics, knowledge management, contact hours in online education, and accreditation. The volume also includes a helpful essay on concerns about online accessibility (including reaching disabled persons), affordability, and

accountability. Interesting contributions include “The Sloan Consortium Pillars and Quality Scorecard,” that is used to benchmark effectiveness, efficiencies, and innovation, and “The Power of a Collaborative, Collegial Approach to Improving Online Teaching and Learning.” Of notable mention is the careful attempt throughout to focus on issues related to: government – federal, state, and district levels, accrediting agencies, professional bodies, faculty, managers/administrators, controllers, assessors, and learners.

Teaching Theology & Religion readers may find a number of relevant essays. The volume does not engage theological education or religious studies in the liberal arts. Still, discussions and principles raised are transposable to online religious education. Online religion studies and theology programs continue to become more popular. A 2012 study of online education in the United States shows that 70 percent of higher education institutions surveyed have recognized the critical importance of online education; 6.7 million students enrolled in at least one online course (I. Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman, *Changing Course*, Babson Survey Research Group, Pearson Education, and Sloan Consortium, 2013). An August 2014 web search at www.GradSchools.com lists more than 150 accredited online religious programs: 51 doctorates, 138 masters, 22 certificates, and 7 hybrid programs. Religious community online has been empirically investigated (Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, Peter Lang, 2005). In time, religious educators will also study this phenomenon. Until then, religious educational administrators and leaders can contextualize insights from this volume with classical areas of program creation and evaluation in curriculum, instruction, institution, faculty, and student components, to provide innovative online educational program.

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