



Online Teaching in Education, Health and Human Services 1st Edition

Magy, Martin; and Martin, Don
Charles C. Thomas Publishers Ltd., 2015

Book Review

Tags: online education | online learning | online teaching

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Date Reviewed: November 30, -0001

The challenge of teaching an online course brings a measure of trepidation into the heart and mind of even the most experienced classroom instructor. The authors provide a resource for the online instructor to understand who online students are, how they learn, and how to help them achieve their educational goals online (vi). While they accomplish this objective in some senses, the constant repetition of themes detracts from its overall contribution and makes it difficult to recommend.

The opening chapter explains the pros and cons of traditional versus online learning, as well as differences and myths of online instruction. The second chapter covers critical issues in online education and then offers success strategies and best practices for instructors. A short explanation of synchronous, asynchronous, and hybrid models and the pros and cons of each strategy, including the type of content best taught by each method, forms the third chapter. At this point, the reader is prepared to start delving into actual practices for online teaching but instead the authors repeat the content of the previous three chapters. Arguably they offer additional perspectives about online teaching and learning in the ensuing chapters, yet the material is so repetitious, one cannot remember the new focus because the text reads like a perpetual review of content. This practice continues for the next five chapters. The one exception is found in chapter 7 where the authors are more focused on specifics necessary for instructors to successfully begin a course with students – including examples of pre-course and early communication (130-131).

Chapter 9 continues the specific and valuable contribution chapter 7 begins by looking at specific activities and skills online instructors need for developing critical thinking skills in students, including teamwork practices, and how to assess such learning. The final chapter

identifies various strategies that help instructors to manage time well when engaging the demands of teaching online courses. Though partially redundant, the addition of specific tactics and illustrations make the book a helpful contribution.

Overall, some helpful principles emerge clearly from the book to help a novice online instructor plan and prepare for a course. The samples provided are beneficial, though an experienced instructor may have been able to develop these on their own from the principles discussed. Unfortunately, in a few instances an example was given that was contrary to the summative advice given. For example, one of the communication tips, to avoid the use of all caps (135), was followed by sample messages to students that included all caps. While appreciating some concepts presented in this volume, this reader will continue to look for a better-organized and more step-by-step book for assisting online instructors.

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