Chapter 9

Open Educational Resource: How to Teach Online – An Open Online Course That Prepares Instructors to Teach Online

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ABSTRACT

To meet the needs of millennial learners, instructors in higher education must evolve their teaching methodology to include social learning, interaction (learner-instructor, learner-learner, and learner-content) personalization and universal design. In order to innovate current teaching practices, novel methods must be shared, demonstrated, and reflected upon among collaborating educators. One way to transform teaching methodologies to improve outcomes among twenty-first century learners is professional development. The open educational environment is an ideal venue for facilitating this transformation in teaching philosophy and pedagogy. To this end, Teaching Online 101 (TO 101) was developed as an open educational course available to anyone that desires to improve teaching and learning by examining their current practice, familiarizing themselves with learner-centric and interactive strategies and thus adapting their approach to twenty-first century learners in online and hybrid environments.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education is warming to the notion of providing access to free and low-cost open resources to support students and teachers with accessible learning objects, on-demand. This more open approach, although non-traditional, breaks down both inter- and intra- institutional silos and encourages collaboration between learners and teachers. It introduces diverse and multiple perspectives and promotes mutual respect for varying ideas.

The number of students taking online courses continues to increase in public and private universities and colleges, year over year but this increase is not found at for-profit institutions (NCES, 2014). The decrease of enrollment in for-profit schools may be due to increased scrutiny of the quality of their

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offerings and potential for student debt. This may contribute to why potential students are scanning the educational landscape for open educational opportunities (Babson, 2015).

In addition, a learner-centered approach increasingly characterizes higher education practice (Brown, Dehoney & Millichap, 2017). To meet the needs of millennial learners, instructors in higher education must evolve their teaching methodology to include social learning, interaction (learner-instructor, learner-learner and learner-content) personalization and universal design. In order to innovate current teaching practices, novel methods must be shared, demonstrated and reflected upon among collaborating educators. One way to transform teaching methodologies to improve outcomes among 21st century learners is professional development. The open educational environment is an ideal venue for facilitating this transformation in teaching philosophy and pedagogy.

To this end, Teaching Online 101 (TO 101) was developed as an open educational course available to anyone that desires to improve teaching and learning by examining their current practice, familiarizing themselves with learner-centric and interactive strategies and thus adapting their approach to 21st century learners in online and hybrid environments.

BACKGROUND

This chapter will discuss the underpinnings by which Teaching Online (TO) 101 was developed. This includes the philosophical stance, learning objectives and outcomes. It also encompasses the design, structure and purpose. Course revisions, based on key feedback from over 500 instructor-participants, will be shared. Finally, an invitation to join this open course, contribute to it or recommend it to others will be provided.

TO 101 (Faculty Certification) was originally developed to provide a response to Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Accreditation standards by which all online instructors at an institution undergo professional development for how to effectively teach online. It is also offered at another university on the west coast and online to anyone, via OER commons.

Of course, it was logical to build TO 101 as an online course itself to emulate the environment teachers and learners would experience. Opening the course to a global audience of educators also made sense to promote the sharing of multiple perspectives, display a plethora of techniques and facilitate social learning.

Teaching Online 101 is a 100% online, asynchronous course. It is an introduction to basic concepts involved in teaching and learning successfully online. It discusses the concept of change and how that process can be positive. Instructional strategies that are known to be effective in online environments are covered. The importance of structure and organization in online courses is emphasized. Finally, we will examine specific issues, learner profiles and ways to handle these scenarios to promote student success.

To be clear, the primary purpose of TO 101 is to transform ways of thinking about teaching methodology and philosophy in terms of hybrid and online environments. Secondarily, learners may also gain knowledge and skills in how to use a learning management system, the rationale for the way it is used in this course and how to develop elements of online or hybrid courses within this type of system.
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