Online Teaching and Learning: Best Practice Tips and Pearls of Wisdom for Faculty

Presented by Dr. Jodi Katz:

Licensed clinical psychologist/neuropsychologist, teaching ***online*** university-level psychology courses for 15 years, undergraduate and graduate; experience in online course development, recently completing developing my 4th online course and passing Quality Matters standards (QM, 2016 – 2020)

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Introduction

Online teaching…here to stay??

- Online education has been continuing to grow in popularity (e.g., schedule flexibility and customized education; Keengwe & Kidd, 2002)
- Now even more in demand due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- So… *role of faculty* in the virtual learning environment needs to be a focus of "best practice"
- My goal for this webinar:
  - Share best practice tips & "pearls of wisdom" for faculty teaching online
  - Convey the "power" of online teaching due to inherent features and functionality of the learning management platforms and best practices

Myths

- Online instructor has to be an EXPERT in technology to deliver quality online education
- Online courses are inferior to on-campus courses
- Online teaching is merely just lecturing on Zoom, GoToMeeting or other synchronous platform
- Online students are isolated and disconnected from instructors and their classmates

Another goal of webinar: To dispel myths such as those above.

Role of Online Faculty: 4 Categories

- Pedagogical (teaching and educating): facilitator of learning vs traditional instructor
- Social (faculty presence & engagement, student engagement; creating sense of community)
- Managerial (setting expectations, pace of the course, decision making)
- Technical (familiarity with the learning management platform such as Blackboard or Canvas; resources at hand to resolve technical issues)

Pedagogical Role of Online Faculty

(Teaching and Educating)

- Keep what you consider to be essential learning components
- Student access: Course syllabus, course overview and course level objectives
- Align learning activities with weekly learning objectives to course level objectives.
- Online pedagogy largely emphasizes *active learning student-centered methodologies*. (Keengwe & Kidd, 2010, Koedinger et al., 2015)
  - Discussion Boards, critical thinking activities, application of material

Pedagogical Role of Online Faculty

(Teaching and Educating)

- In-class activities to online: some translate easily; others will not
  - Be creative, innovative… engaging coursework enhances learning (Mayer, as cited in Abramson, 2020).
    - e.g., Podcasts, video streams, recording tools, group projects, online labs
  - Ex: psych testing course: review "mock" test manual and discuss evidence supporting test's validity, reliability, etc.
  - Ex: video recording to demonstrate clinical interviewing skills/sharing psychological test results with volunteer "pretend" client

Pedagogical Role of Online Faculty

(Teaching and Educating)

- Lectures
  - PowerPoint lecture notes for each week/module
  - Record your lecture notes and post to the course
  - Media Slides to go along with PowerPoint lecture notes
  - Real-time lectures using a synchronous tool (e.g., Zoom, Adobe Connect, GoToMeeting)

Pedagogical Role of Online Faculty

(Teaching and Educating)

- The Discussion Board
  - Replaces the face-to-face classroom.
  - Creating effective discussion questions important for student participation and learning.
  - CREST+ model for writing effective Discussion Board questions to facilitate learning (Akin & Neal, 2007).
    - cognitive, reading, experiential, style and type.

Pedagogical Role of Online Faculty

(Teaching and Educating)

Discussion Board (continued):

- My own examples: engaging, self-reflective, forward-thinking
  - Psychology as a Career course:
    - discuss how you can take a more proactive role in your undergraduate education to help obtain your academic and career goals.

  - General Psychology or Ethics course:
    - review the following journal articles and discuss which of the APA Ethical Principles and Standards are highlighted or represented by the articles' content

Pedagogical Role of Online Faculty

(Teaching and Educating)

Discussion Board (continued):

- Adult Psychopathology *graduate* course:
  - review a podcast interview of an individual diagnosed with a particular disorder and discuss what challenges might you have as a therapist working with someone with this disorder?

Pedagogical Role of Online Faculty

(Teaching and Educating)

- Synchronous (live or in real-time) class session (e.g., Collaborate, Adobe Connect, GoToMeeting, Zoom):
  - Considered a critical component of online educating and learning.
  - Students regarded online courses including a synchronous component as having higher instructional quality than the online course having *only* asynchronous methods (Ward, Peters & Shelley, as cited in Crawford-Ferre & Wiest, 2012).

Pedagogical Role of Online Faculty

(Teaching and Educating)

- Synchronous class session continued:
  - Personally, 4 synchronous sessions per 15-week online course = student satisfaction. Recording available.
    - (Note: include University or Dept *Recording Policy* in syllabus)
  - Hogan and Sathy (2018) present suggestions on effective synchronous class meetings.

Pedagogical Role of Online Faculty

(Teaching and Educating)

- Sensitivity and flexibility
  - Students' varied learning styles; assessment by varied techniques
    - Students more satisfied & become versatile learners when assessed by a variety of methods (Zapalska & Brozik, 2006).
  - Inequities among students (Sathy, as cited in Abramson, 2020).

Social Role of Online Faculty

Faculty "Presence" and Engagement

Consider the following quote:

- "Anyone who listens carefully to the way people say things quickly learns that the particular words a speaker uses to describe an event or an experience can be a rich source of information about his feelings and attitudes" (Wiener & Mehrabian, as cited in Richardson, Maeda, Lv & Caskurlu, 2017, p. 402.)

- Quote dates to 1968 but applies to importance of faculty presence in the virtual classroom

Social Role of Online Faculty

Faculty "Presence" and Engagement

- Respect and engagement:
  - increase students' level of participation and retention, student perceptions of academic quality, overall enriched learning experience (Centner, 2014;Conrad, as cited in Akin & Neal, 2007; Hayden, 2009; Pickett, 2019; Roberson & Klotz, 2002).
- Engaged online instructor:
  - frequent communication, empathy, timely responsiveness to questions/concerns (Hayden, 2009).

Social Role of Online Faculty

Faculty "Presence and Engagement

- Importance of personalization, friendly gestures, overall positive tone related to enhanced learning (Mayer as cited in Abramson, 2020; Roberson & Klotz, 2002).

- Strategies I use to facilitate "presence" and engagement:
  - Welcome announcement, Introduction (short bio, "Meet your Professor" video)
  - Posting contact information
  - Frequent communications and timely responses to students' questions

Social Role of Online Faculty

Faculty "Presence" and Engagement

- Strategies I use to facilitate "presence" (continued):
  - Use of first names in responding to students' questions
  - Thanking students for questions/comments
  - "Virtual" office hours
  - Posting comments and corrective feedback on discussion board
  - Request initial feedback re course early on
  - Conduct synchronous sessions
  - End of the week "reminders" (e.g., activity due dates, replying to classmates' discussion comments)

Social Role of Online Faculty

Sense of Community and Student Engagement

- "Presence" role of online faculty includes creating a **sense of community** in the virtual classroom

  - Repeatedly mentioned in the literature as a critical element in promoting faculty & student engagement in the online course.
  - A learning community including instructor-student AND student-to-student interaction identified as key effective strategy for online learning.

  (Hayden, 2009)

Social Role of Online Faculty

Sense of Community and Student Engagement

- Students posting introductions; faculty response “nice to meet” everyone
- Virtual “student lounge” on Discussion Board
- Questions & Answers forum on Discussion Board
- Group work = opportunities for online students to use technologies to collaborate (Centner, 2014).

Social Role of Online Faculty

Sense of Community and Student Engagement

- Discussion board
  - Key strategy for developing a learning community (Akin & Neal, 2007; Centner, 2014; Hayden, 2009).
  - Peer-to-peer interaction and collaboration support learning in the online course (Crawford-Ferre & Wiest, 2012; Tee & Karney, as cited in Crawford-Ferre & Wiest, 2012).

Social Role of Online Faculty

Sense of Community and Student Engagement

- Ex of “best practice” for student engagement on the discussion board:
  - “Value added” requirement: students provide example related to topic, expand on the discussion idea, or offer different perspective (Hayden, 2009).
  - Comment on something they already know about topic, self-reflection & replying to classmates = student engagement (Akin & Neal, 2007).

Social Role of Online Faculty

Sense of Community and Student Engagement

My strategies to build a learning community on Discussion Board include:

- Students asked to reply to 1-2 classmates' postings per discussion question
- Replies to classmates are to be substantive to facilitate discussion & critical thinking
- Students check initial postings to address comments/questions from peers

Technology Role for Online Faculty

- No need to be an expert with technology, however, recommend familiarity.
  - Responsibility of course design, technology, and teaching/learning typically different depts/teams.
  - Understanding many aspects of course design & delivery helpful to experience effective online teaching.
  - Personally, learning about the technology resulted in my feeling more in control over teaching in the virtual environment.

Technology Role for Online Faculty

To increase familiarity with technology and LMS, several authors (Finley et al, 2005; as cited in Keengwe & Kidd, 2010) recommend:

- Professional development opportunities (including taking an online course, shadowing a colleague's online course).

- Ongoing trainings (seek out tutorials/training materials provided by your university/college).

Research shows: instructors able to transition and adapt teaching strategies effectively for the online course with good professional development programs (Crawford-Ferre & Wiest, 2012).

Technology Role for Online Faculty

- Reach out to LMS Tech Support
  - Some have a “live chat” component for instant assistance (some incl separate for faculty and students)

- Establish professional rapport with textbook publisher sales consultant for your university or college
  - Often helpful for innovative and dynamic learning tools associated with the textbook (integrated or standalone product)
  - If students delayed in obtaining required materials, ask textbook publisher about potential free initial period to an e-book (if available), or an extension on free initial access.

Technology Role for Online Faculty

- Online Faculty technology role includes helping students with technology
  - Include “Resources” section in the online course (school help desk & LMS technical support contact).
  - Encourage students to seek out resources from university/college.
  - **“How to Navigate this Course”** section in your course (e.g. home page)

Managerial Role for Online Faculty

- Set clear expectations:
  - Syllabus, “Welcome-to-the-Course” announcement & introductory messages
    - How often or frequently to log into the course per week
    - Where to find faculty communications
    - Preferences for communicating with faculty (e.g., use the LMS and not university email except for urgent matters, for example)
    - Attending synchronous class meetings: 1 of 2 ways: live or recorded class (inform of recording policy)

Managerial Role for Online Faculty

- Set clear expectations (continued):
  - Discussion board postings due dates (initial posts & replies to classmates)
  - Substantive discussion posts: “Good post, Jane” is not considered substantive.
  - Checking back to initial posts at end of week to address questions/comments left by a classmate
  - Decisions about posting personal, sensitive information on the discussion board (I instruct not to.)

Managerial Role for Online Faculty

Set clear expectations (continued):

- Grading Scheme: Distribution of Points and Grading Rubric
  - Distribution of points guides students to invest learning efforts in areas you emphasize
  - Grading rubric:
    - guides the work, reflects expectations, facilitates completeness of work
    - helps focus attention on areas students may not attend to (e.g., APA style)
    - applicable to Discussion Board (e.g., for level of participation) and assignments
    - facilitates ease of grading

Managerial Role for Online Faculty

- Setting the PACE for the course
  - Share views re “online course” versus an “independent study” course
  - Decisions re posting discussion work ahead (e.g., lock discussion forums)
  - Time frame for faculty responses to students’ questions

- Other decision-making considerations
    - Academic honesty policies (e.g., Honor code statement)
    - Late work policies

Managerial Role for Online Faculty

- Other decision-making considerations (continued):
    - Discussion board settings (initial posts required before viewing others')
    - Tools to support academic and exam integrity
    - If traditional-type exams included, will they be larger exams or small quizzes, timed or untimed, open book or closed book?

Some Closing Remarks.....

- An organized, well thought-out online course with an engaged faculty instructor can deliver quality education that is rewarding to both, professor and students!!
- To quote Pickett (2019):

  > "In the asynchronous arena it is not enough that we record and post a lecture with power points with "canned" discussion questions, we, as instructors, need to create an environment that fosters engagement, collaboration, and creative behavior" (p. 129).

- It has been clear to me: ***faculty engagement facilitates student engagement*** in the online class.
- Myths?

THANK YOU FOR "ATTENDING" THIS WEBINAR !

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Questions and Answers

- Please submit your questions and comments through the tool that is provided.

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