

## Strengths and Weaknesses of Pedagogies Underlying Online, Blended Learning, and MOOC's

Advanced technologies and media have rapidly increased the progression of online, blended learning, and massive open online course (MOOC) learning formats. Self-directed learning, collaborative inquiry, instructor and peer feedback, and development of social presence are all pedagogical methods when utilized in e-learning formats can improve student learning outcomes when applied to fitting content and needs of students.

Self-directed learning has become important with the exponential growth in information and ever changing technologies. People are challenged with continuously developing skills and knowledge in order to be competitive in the work force. For example, distance learning has increased in popularity as it offers flexibility of scheduling and educational opportunities that might not otherwise be available. However, self-directed learning sounds like an easy strategy to implement, but in reality, people often are not motivated or need the social support of community to help them engage in the learning process (Lin, 2008).

Collaborative inquiry is a design that recognizes exploring issues and determining solutions through questioning, reflection, and dialogue. Learning is achieved by participating in dialogue through interactions and basing new learning on prior experiences (Lin, 2008). The learner can reach out to peers to collaborate, share knowledge with others, build on each other's knowledge, or co-create knowledge. Forms of collaborative inquiry include participating in discussion forums, blogs, and wiki spaces. These technologies help users create online communities where they can connect with others who have the same interests or expertise. Through the use of these online tools, students have more opportunities to an increasing knowledge base. However, learners must be willing to actively seek communications with others

who have the same aspirations instead of depending on the educator to find answers to their questions or provide the knowledge they are seeking (Lin, 2008).

Providing feedback that accesses the quality of work or student performance can help guide a student's learning throughout an online course and establish teaching presence (Getzlaf, Perry, Toffner, Lamarche, & Edwards, 2009). Feedback can include encouragement and direction, so students can expand their ideas and reach specific learning goals or outcomes. Feedback from peers can be utilized to critique student artifacts, while feedback from instructors can provide both guidance and motivation to the learner. In addition, when students participate in providing feedback to peers, students receive practice at critically examining a concept. However, if feedback is not constructive or provided in a timely manner, then the feedback may not be beneficial to the student.

Students establish social presence when they have a sense of belonging and ownership in their own learning (Swan & Shih, 2005). Social presence can be developed in online discussions using textual cues which indicate satisfaction during interactions between students. In addition, the development of relationships between students during online discussions increases student social presence; and in return, students present more social presence in responses to their peers. However, research found that online discussions that focused on readings that were provided for students did not produce personal responses that led to having a social presence. Instead, discussions based on a student's own personal experience led to a higher social presence in the course. The use of online discussions which focus on personal experiences can increase the student's social presence in the discussion or interactions with peers (Swan & Shih, 2005).

Online, blended learning, and massive open online course (MOOC) learning formats provide new learning opportunities when course design includes proven online pedagogy.

## References

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