

Chapter VIII

Instructional Design Factors and Requirements for Online Courses and Modules

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Abstract

The nature of digital content and tools, coupled with the communications capabilities available through online instruction, can, if leveraged properly, provide opportunities for quality instructional delivery. This chapter proposes that — even in an environment of remote, asynchronous, web-based instruction — approaches and the best of effective classroom practices may not be sufficient to address the full range of capabilities the

technology provides. Through work done by IBM and the Florida Virtual School (FLVS), principles and models for leveraging the advantages offered by the technology environment and overcoming the difficulties inherent have been worked out in ways that offer significant promise to all providers of virtual schooling.

Introduction

Ms. Alvarez scanned the faces of her charges, and then pointed to the chart on the whiteboard: “The point of price equilibrium is where the supply and demand curves intersect. I know that sounds complex, but it really isn’t!” Twenty-two blank faces pointed randomly all over the room. *Let’s try this*, she thought. “All it really means is that if the show at the Cineplex seats 250 people and only 100 want to go to the 4:00 p.m. show, they reduce the price for that show time. And if 400 people want to go to the 7:30 p.m. show, they charge more for that show time because people going out for the evening will pay extra to get a seat.” *Did anyone follow that one?*, she wondered. A quick glance told her that Khairi and Stephen were staring out the window, the group of jocks in the back of the room was passing notes back and forth, Song Wah was writing down everything as usual, and, wonder of wonders, more than half were actually watching her. *Now let’s see who got it*: “Can anyone explain why they charge less for the 4:00 p.m. show?”

LaVon’s hand shot in the air. “Yeah, I’ve noticed that. It’s not fair that people who don’t work or go to school can pay less to see a movie, and when we want to go out on a date, we have to pay full price! Why don’t they charge more during low attendance so they’ll make more money from the people who do show up?”

Just the right question. LaVon, you’re hired as my straight man! “Because they’re thinking about the supply and demand curves! Let’s look at what happens on the curves when supply — the number of seats — is constant and demand — the number of people who want to go see a show — either goes up or down. Then we’ll see what happens if they open a new screen for a hot show, increasing supply. Then you’ll know why you get gouged on Friday night, but a Saturday afternoon date is a real bargain.” Forty-four eyes stared straight at her. *Dating and money works every time....*

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