

# Chapter 6

## Best Practices for Web– Conferencing and Webinars: Exploring the Efficacy of Web Technology (Webinars) by Learner and School Characteristics

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter seeks to evaluate the efficacy of web-based (webinar) learning in different academic settings during pandemic periods. It begins with a review of basic learning theories and then proceeds to a short discussion of the different modes of instruction. Afterward, it assesses the series of data elements from the Department of Education to determine trends in the school characteristics for the analysis. It also includes a short discussion on international perspectives from six countries that share in the pandemic experience. It concludes with a set of recommendations for utilizing web-based (webinar) learning and a set of references for converting traditional pedagogy to online platforms, developing mastery in instructional design, and a common core of lesson plans for K12 platforms.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Learning should be natural, engaging, and critical to the student’s academic experience. Recently, schools transitioned from the ground (or onsite classroom) to distance (and online) models. Many unknowingly reproduced the original curriculum and delivery model onto a digital platform, falsely believing that what worked well in one setting would be equally beneficial in another. This was far from the truth, leaving instructors and their students unfulfilled and emotionally bewildered. The reality is... instructors must a) redesign their strategy for teaching online by identifying the critical success factors (CSF) or key components of each lesson plan that must be accomplished and b) develop the best strategy for achieving

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-7653-3.ch006

that outcome, given the following constraints: university technical platform, the student's digital savvy, and existing administrative support capability. In some cases, it is a minor adjustment; and in others, it is a significant undertaking. This chapter will offer insight and best practices for developing digitized lectures in web-based learning (webinars) during pandemic periods and enhancing or supplementing existing course curriculum towards more favorable outcomes.

## **HISTORY**

### **Learning Theories**

Before the discussion on the effectiveness of web technology (webinars) in different learning settings begins, a review some basic foundational concepts is warranted. Early research indicates that there are three formative theories about learning: behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructionism. Behavioral learning is based upon the early research of Skinner (1963). It reflects a stimulus and response construct where the subject is exposed to a condition (and action) learns to repeat the sequence to achieve an outcome. Cognitive learning (Piaget, 1971) is a more conditioned method where a problem or situation is presented to the subject. A specific course of action is prescribed, and the subject is conditioned to replicate this sequence whenever presented with similar scenarios. Finally, constructionism (Bruner, 1966) is where the subject is presented with a series of data points (situational analysis) and allowed to develop their strategy for success given the constraints of the experiment or condition. Each theory has its merit and can be effective for learning environments.

Contrastly, each theory has equally challenging shortcomings. For example, under behaviorism, if the subject has not yet encountered a specific prescribed stimulus, then they may become confused and suspend their interaction entirely because they lack the skill or knowledge necessary to proceed forward. In cognitive settings, the learned technique for accomplishing a goal may not be the most efficient manner. Finally, in constructionism, the absence of clear guidance towards decision-making, social norms, ethics, and legal conformance could lead to extreme or divergent thinking. How facilitators approach designing instruction using web technology (webinars) for distance and online learning matters because each of these theories plays a significant role in managing student expectations and behavior.

### **Modes of Instruction**

#### **Traditional Face-to-Face(F2F)**

In the traditional F2F setting, the instructor provides the primary source for all content and delivery; however, they may elect to enhance or supplement a given lesson plan with web technology (webinars) to enrich or reinforce a given subject or perspective. For example, a science teacher might elect to include an archived documentary or interview of a subject-matter expert (SME) for a given discussion topic to enlighten students, or they may elect to request a personal interview with the SME so their students can interact directly with the subject and ask questions.

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