## Chapter 2.9

# Instructional Challenges in Higher Education Online Courses Delivered through a Learning Management System by Subject Matter Experts

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## ABSTRACT

The authors are Instructional Designers developing online courses in higher education. These courses are facilitated by Subject Matter Experts and delivered through a Learning Management System. They propose that instructional alignment with pedagogic beliefs is the best instructional foundation for original course designs in this instructional context, and examine three factors unique to this context. They propose new instructional design models and a new instructional system of design to address the instructional challenges specific to their learning system context.

## INTRODUCTION

As Instructional Designers (IDs) in higher education, one of our main responsibilities involves working with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to design online courses for delivery in a Learning

Management System (LMS). We have identified three main factors specific to this instructional context. The first is the ongoing nature of the relationship between SMEs and IDs as they collaborate on the design and delivery of online courses. The second is the constraint that these never-delivered courses must be designed without the benefit of learner-generated data to inform the process. The third is the foundational role which the course facilitator's pedagogical beliefs play throughout the course design process.

In this chapter we propose a taxonomy for an ID-designed Online Course and define the terms used in our discussion. We then discuss the three factors associated with our instructional context. We propose a model for achieving learner-driven course designs through a phased approach. We examine two elements which shape our learning system context: the pedagogical effects of LMS adoption and success factors related to Online Learning Environments (OLEs). We explore the role of context in ID. Finally, we present a framework for an Instructional System of Design

(ISD) we are developing to produce original course designs for our learning system context.

## TAXONOMY AND TERMS

In order to communicate more effectively about our instructional context, we have developed the term "SME-F (Subject Matter Expert-facilitated) online courses" to refer to online courses taught by the same individual responsible for providing a course's content. We will refer to this person as the "SME/F" (Subject Matter Expert/Facilitator). We propose the following taxonomy in order to situate our terms within the larger context of online courses designed by IDs (see Figure 1).

We believe that there are critical distinctions between the instructional context for the type of course we have described and the instructional context for other types of online courses. For example, in an I-F online course the Instructor is facilitating a course with content provided by a SME, and she or he may or may not be an expert in the content. Also, the Instructor is not likely to

*Figure 1. Taxonomy of online course designed by instructional designers*

| Course Type | Design Resources | | | | Course Facilitator | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ID | SME | SME/F | I | L-F | PA-F | I-F | SME/F |
| L-F | X | X | | | X | | | |
| PA-F | X | X | | | | X | | |
| I-F | X | X | | X | | | X | |
| SME-F | X | | X | | | | | X |

L-F = Learner-facilitated

PA-F = Pedagogical Agent-facilitated

I-F = Instructor-facilitated

SME-F = Subject Matter Expert-facilitated

ID = Instructional Designer

SME = Subject Matter Expert

SME/F = Subject Matter Expert/Facilitator

I = Instructor

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