

Podcast – October 13, 2006

Instructional Strategies to Enhance Online Learning

A recurring theme on this segment of the podcast has been the challenge of motivating online students to become actively engaged with the course. In a previous podcast we discussed the paradigm shift that many instructors feel is necessitated when teaching an online class. In a traditional, face-to-face class, the instructor tends to be the focus of attention as the main dispenser of knowledge. This exemplifies the classic Objectivist view of education: the instructor imparts knowledge through lecture, guidance, and discussion. Assessment of student knowledge typically involves a test of how much of what the instructor said, the student remembers. Contrasted with that approach is the Constructivist view which holds that learners “construct” their knowledge and reality and, therefore, students might learn different things from the same class. This second view demands a much more active role on the part of the learner and, consequently, less control on the part of the instructor. Many have argued that the online environment is well suited to embrace this second view. While not disagreeing, others have observed that this paradigm shift has not been fully realized yet.

The focus of this “teaching tip” is to present some teaching strategies for enhancing learning that are consistent with the Constructivist approach. The ten instructional strategies listed below come from the Illinois Online Network web site (see URL below) and interestingly, all these strategies were developed and are used in traditional classroom environments; many seemed particularly well suited to implementing online.

Learning Contracts	Small Group Work
Discussion	Project
Lecture	Collaborative Learning
Self-Directed Learning	Case Study
Mentorship	Forum

Resources

Instructional Strategies <http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/resources/tutorials/pedagogy/instructionalstrategies.asp>

Learning Styles <http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/resources/tutorials/id/learningStyles.asp>