

The future of learning: Teaching industrial and organizational psychology in all modalities

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Higher education has been seeing a sharp increase in online learning for more than a decade (Allen & Seaman, 2017) allowing faculty to expand to online modalities (Fredericksen, 2017), and now the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this transformation with the necessitation of virtual learning for the masses. This not only creates an opportunity for increased research in online learning, but an opportunity to apply the best practices in online learning we already know. In recent years, institutions began incorporating hybrid and fully-online courses. While this evolution was slow and often met with skepticism (Dumford & Miller, 2018), it has become a necessity in the current pandemic climate. Educators have been unexpectedly forced into the world of virtual learning and now, it doesn't appear that higher education is going to be able to return to its old "normal" anytime soon.

Educators may be planning to use traditional teaching methods intended for in-person courses (i.e., lecture; mid-term/final exam assessments) in an online format. However, these methods do not align with best practices encouraged for learning in a completely online modality

(Geri, Winer, & Zaks, 2017). The online mode often focuses on delivering some aspects of the course asynchronously (Watts, 2016), which means that students can engage and complete coursework at any time during a given instructional period such as a week. This mode has several advantages, including eliminating geographical and time barriers between the student, instructor and institution. The online teaching modality may be particularly useful as students' lives have been disrupted by the pandemic in several ways, presenting unforeseen barriers to learning which may include geographical constraints as some students are not able to live in dormitories and time constraints as they may be

facing multiple demands (e.g., childcare, elder-care, work demands). It is essential to recognize that the course development process and experience varies from an in-person or remote course, in which course content is delivered synchronously at scheduled days and times (Watts, 2016).

In the focal article by Kath and colleagues (2020), the authors share several specific recommendations to incorporate knowledge from the field of I-O psychology into the classroom. We would like to extend their discussion by sharing how their recommendations align with best practices in online education. Although we draw from our experiences in creating courses for the online Masters program, we expect these examples will easily translate to activities in all types of modalities and both in undergraduate and graduate programs.

Development Processes and Activities

The first step in our online course development process includes working on a Course Snapshot or Blueprint in which overall and weekly course objectives are identified following Bloom's taxonomy (Training & Development; Kath et al., 2020). While many faculty may already identify course objectives, to extend this further, each learning resource (e.g., scholarly article, podcast) as well as assessment (e.g., quiz, project, discussion) should map onto each weekly objective or be removed from the course. In addition, faculty should take the time to demonstrate the connection between objectives and course materials to students to explain the "why" behind learning, which will likely increase student buy-in and increase follower behavior (Leadership; Kath et al., 2020). For each topic, faculty can consider developing courses including the following pieces to engage students: 1) Learning Resources (i.e., readings, PowerPoint slides, short videos), 2) Practice Exercise (i.e., a non-graded immediate self-assessment that can include pairing key terms with definitions, multiple choice, fill in the blank), 3) Interaction Activity (i.e., an opportunity to connect with peers in the form of discussion posts, team projects), 4) Application

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Exercise (i.e., any assignment that explicitly allows direct application of course materials, such as the job analysis project), and 5) Review (i.e., an assessment that allows a review check of material, which can include a reflection question, short MC quiz). This framework can be utilized for all types of modalities and when teaching both undergraduate and graduate courses.

After the Course Snapshot document has been completed, instructors can move into the next phase of the course development process and complete Weekly Content Maps or Storyboard (Shaver, 2017). This content map outlines in detail how the student will “experience” the course for that particular week. Faculty should begin with an Introduction message, which sets the context for the weekly learning. In an online modality, this can be in the form of a recorded video and faculty teaching in person, can prepare their thoughts ahead of time to share at the beginning of class. Questions such as, “*What is the “big picture” we are trying to drive home?, How does that fit into the narrative of the whole course?, What skills will the students be gaining here? What should their approach to learning be this week to engage with the material?*” can be addressed. This introduction can be tailored to meet the characteristics of the faculty member, but it really sets the tone for the “instructor presence”. Some creative ways this can be done online is by having the instructor share big picture concepts for the week through personal anecdotes in academia or their applied experience, memes, or through storytelling. For example, when teaching recruitment & selection, students can follow a fictional consultant going through the steps of the selection process for an organization. This big picture exercise can set the stage for the detailed information to follow.

In the online course modality, faculty need to be very explicit and transparent because they do not have the luxury of articulating expectations out loud in a synchronous session. Each deliverable requires the instructor to clearly write out the purpose, instructions or prompt, delivery mode and deadline. These clear expectations can be adapted for all types of modalities to meet the needs of all learners. Given that verbal and immediate feedback looks differently in an online course, a detailed rubric outlining the criteria and anchored ratings (e.g., “exemplary, competent, needs improvement and unsatisfactory”) is used to assess deliverables, which supports students with strong performance orientations (Training & Development; Kath et al., 2020). The detailed grading rubric allows the instructor to communicate an evaluation of the work to

the student and have more time to provide individualized developmental feedback (Leadership; Kath et al., 2020). Faculty teaching in all modalities and at both the undergraduate and graduate levels are encouraged to adopt detailed rubrics to improve performance evaluations for students on coursework. All of the learning materials, activities and assessments discussed ensure students have repeated opportunities each week and throughout the semester for feedback and improvement (Training & Development; Kath et al., 2020). The larger number of deliverables for online courses allow students the opportunity to compensate for a poor grade in any one assessment (Training & Development; Kath et al., 2020), which can also be considered for all modalities. Next, we dive into sharing more information about the online course experience and highlight alignment with I-O best practices.

Online Course Experience

One teaching best practice is to have students begin by introducing themselves to their instructor and their classmates. This is especially important in asynchronous online courses to create a foundation that will build learner-to-learner dialog and help facilitate community building (Boettcher & Conrad, 2016). We further enhance this by asking students to create videos, upload pictures and share background information, professional information such as work experience, their goals for the course and other course-specific prompts (e.g., Have you hired anyone? What experience have you had as a producer or consumer of research?). This exercise serves multiple purposes, including highlighting student motivation and diverse backgrounds (Training & Development; Diversity & Inclusion; Kath et al., 2020). Instructors from all modalities are encouraged to adopt similar kinds of exercises.

As in many online programs, students often include those with diverse professional backgrounds, including individuals who recently graduated with little formal work experience to students with senior executive level positions. To cater to the broad range of experience levels (Diversity & Inclusion; Kath et al., 2020), faculty may need to consider tailoring course material to meet the needs of a wider population. For example, instructors may create discussion posts asking students to reflect on course material as it may relate to their work or extracurricular experiences. In addition, we have created video case studies of professional alumni from our program sharing their experiences relevant to the topics being covered to provide further concrete examples.

Instructors from all modalities may consider utilizing cumulative application-based projects that

students work on each week, including projects involving teams. This can be in the form of a consulting project, applied project (e.g., job analysis, validation project, training project) or a research proposal. This type of assessment allows the instructor to carefully consider spacing and repetition of course material, new concepts and skills, and the opportunity for students of diverse backgrounds to work closely on a common goal (Training & Development, Diversity & Inclusion, Groups & Teams; Kath et al., 2020). In these team projects, students can be encouraged to complete team contracts and final grades can include both individual and group components (Groups & Teams; Kath et al., 2020).

To further foster a diverse and inclusive learning environment, we send out announcements recognizing, acknowledging and/or outlining actions in response to events that impact our students (e.g., Black Lives Matter, Pride Month, recent visa ruling on international students) and encourage students to participate in groups that serve these underrepresented minorities (e.g., Blacks in I-O). Students are also invited to “monthly sessions” that include dedicated time outside of the formal classroom environment to discuss various topics about I-O psychology, networking, recent events and more. To continuously be aware of our own biases, instructors participate in the I-O coffee house chat focused on becoming anti-racist and engage with the various resources and tips shared (Diversity & Inclusion; Kath et al., 2020). These practices and experiences translate into the classroom and cultivate a more inclusive learning environment for students.

Conclusion

The current paper outlines specific ways that the recommended changes put forth by Kath and colleagues (2020) can be extended to all types of modalities and programs. We drew upon specific examples from our own experiences developing a high quality fully online Master’s program in I-O Psychology and described the exercises in ways that can be adopted when teaching undergraduate and graduate students in any modality. We hope readers are able to walk away with specific insights to continue improving their learning environments. We call upon educators in the field to continuously think about making our field accessible and effectively teach I-O in the world of our new “normal”.

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