

NEW BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT

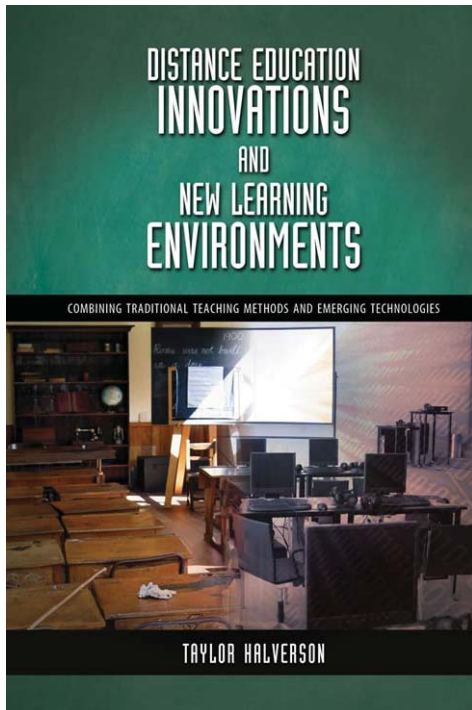
Education

Distance Education Innovations and New Learning Environments

Combining Traditional Teaching Methods
and Emerging Technologies

Taylor Halverson

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Description

Tremendous changes have occurred in the field of education over the past generation as emerging technologies, especially the widespread adoption of the Internet, have created new opportunities for teaching and learning. The tools and technologies employed in successful distance education ventures are now increasingly blended with traditional instructional formats, creating what is known as blended learning environments. However, these developments have not always been informed by sound instructional design theory. Despite a growing body of experimental and practical knowledge concerning the best teaching practices for blended learning contexts, there still remains a great need for prescriptive guidance to design blended learning environments. Instructional design theories can fill that gap.

What are the best strategies for designing instruction for blended learning formats? Which instructional design theories are best suited to accomplish this task? This book proposes to offer some answers to these questions by identifying instructional design theories (i.e., sets of prescriptive strategies for designing instruction), selecting the most promising theory (Pennsylvania State University's innovations in distance education [IDE] theory), applying that theory to a blended learning environment, and using formative evaluation to improve the theory for future applications.



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Distance Education Innovations and New Learning Environments

Description (continued)

Blended learning will continue to be a promising avenue for teaching and learning for the foreseeable future. Many university instructors are already using some aspect of an online or technology-mediated learning environment to supplement, enhance, or extend the traditional learning environment. It is only appropriate that instructional design strategies are provided to guide the development of these learning environments. This book is an attempt to address that need.

This book highlights the positive learning outcomes that the IDE instructional design theory can generate for blended learning environments. For example, based on IDE theory prescriptions, blending learning environments should employ asynchronous discussions. Asynchronous discussion technology can help an instructor accommodate larger class sizes without sacrificing attending to the individual in-class discussions.

The IDE theory is valuable in providing specific strategies for designing sustained and extended learning environments. This finding has implications for humanities-based courses where instruction often touches upon issues that are controversial, complicated, or close to the heart for many students. The formative evaluation of the IDE theory demonstrates that blended learning environments can provide learners a sense of safety for exploring challenging topics. When students feel safe to explore new ideas in a nonthreatening manner, they are more likely to learn and to grow. Blended learning environments, if one follows the IDE theory prescriptions, also provide opportunities for all learners to participate, not just those who might dominate a face-to-face classroom, thereby intimidating other learners from fully participating.

This book adds to the growing evidence that blended learning promises to be a significant step in the evolutionary process of great teaching and learning. It provides solid, straightforward guidance on building robust blended learning, and will be of interest to those in education, particularly instructors and designers of humanities-based college courses. It will also be of interest to instructional design theorists and practitioners seeking guidance in designing blended learning environments.

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