



Book Review of *Learning to Learn Online*

BOOK REVIEW

XINYUE REN 



ABSTRACT

Kwantlen Polytechnic University Learning Centres (2018). *Learning to Learn Online*. Kwantlen Polytechnic University. 100 pages. B.C. Open Textbook Collection (eBook). ISBN: 978-1-989864-10-4 (eBook). <https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/learningtolearnonline/>.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Xinyue Ren

Ohio University, US
xr868414@ohio.edu

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INTRODUCTION

Online and distance education has become a growing phenomenon in various contexts, including K-12, higher education, workforce training, and even informal learning spaces. On the one hand, the advantages of online instruction make education accessible, flexible, and affordable. On the other hand, instructors and students often face additional challenges and barriers while dealing with the complexity of online education. For instance, instructors need to make a greater effort in course design, preparation, and delivery on online teaching than in a face-to-face classroom. Online learners will experience social isolation, high attrition, low motivation, and even mental health issues in online courses. Many resources are available to equip instructors with the needed knowledge and skills to design and develop high-quality online and hybrid courses, such as books, faculty development workshops, teaching communities, and staffing support (e.g., instructional designers). However, limited resources are available to teach learners how to learn online. This open textbook is a timely needed resource to prepare students to become successful online learners.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

The textbook is divided into seven parts: “online learner identity, online learning journey, online instructors, time management, professional communication, online assignments, and strategic reading.” Each part includes between two to eight sections. Each section contains text-based lesson presentations, multimedia resources (e.g., interactive H5P, videos, images, links to external websites), and formative and summative learning activities and assessments (e.g., quizzes and reflections) to deepen and reinforce students’ understanding of online learning strategies. Moreover, accessibility is well-achieved in this e-book. For instance, various formats are available to be compatible with different devices. The authors provided transcripts of the videos and printable versions of lesson presentations and documents.

The first part, “Who am I as an Online Learner,” contains four sections, discussing skills and strategies that self-directed learners are expected to perform in online courses, as indicated in independent learning, metacognition, critical questioning, and information management. The second part, “Who am I on my Learning Journey with?” includes five modules, which talk about the importance of an online learning community in fostering students’ learning experiences, such as community-building, social interactions, and strategies for effective teamwork. The third part, “Who are my Instructors? What is Their Role?” includes two modules, focusing on the role of online instructors and suggestions to foster positive relationships with instructors.

The fourth part, “Time Management for Online Learning,” contains six sections, which discuss the importance of time management skills to enhance online learning effectiveness, including creating a semester schedule, developing a weekly schedule, prioritizing daily tasks, and productively using small blocks of time. The fifth part, “Professional Communication in the Online Environment,” contains four modules, which focus on strategies to effectively communicate with instructors and classmates in professional environments, such as sending emails, participating in online forums, and providing peer-to-peer feedback.

The sixth part, “Analyzing Online Assignments,” includes four sections, addressing the strategies to complete online projects, such as identifying assignment requirements, instructor expectations, and learning objectives, using rubrics to conduct self-evaluation, creating an assignment plan, and receiving feedback to improve the quality of assignments. The seventh part, “Strategic Reading,” contains seven modules, which discuss skills needed to become a strategic reader in online learning environments, as indicated in identifying the purpose of reading, applying the SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review) method in reading activities, reading journal articles strategically, and taking effective notes. In the end, the authors also provided external resources and recommended the next steps for students to develop advanced academic skills and strategies.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Overall, the open textbook provides informative presentations and resources on preparing beginners to become successful online learners, which makes a meaningful contribution to the field of distance education from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Because of its openness, other institutions could easily adapt it to their specific situations, such as K-12, higher education, and workforce training. They can distribute an online learning readiness survey to better understand the characteristics of their student populations before revising and remixing the course content to accommodate their needs. For instance, other institutions can customize some of the sections to reproduce them as online workshops or training programs as the prerequisite for students who are enrolled in online programs or add information about student support resources and academic services, such as student success advising, mentoring, and tutoring.

As the authors mentioned, the book is the beginning of the online learning journey, which exclusively focuses on four basic online learning skills, including time management, professional communications, assignment analysis, and strategic reading. However, many factors and aspects can affect the success of online learning. For instance, in online courses, it is easy for students to feel isolated, overwhelmed, and anxious. It is essential to include the best practices and resources for online learners to deal with such negative feelings and emotions in online learning environments. A majority of online learners are non-traditional students, such as working adults and parents. It is often difficult for them to balance work, study, and personal life. It is also critical to introduce strategies to help them succeed in online programs. For students with disabilities and special needs, the institutions need to consider adding instructions on how to access and use assistive technologies in online courses. Other relevant online skills include digital competence, self-awareness, motivation, digital information literacy, and help-seeking strategies.

CONCLUSION

Students have to learn how to be successful in online learning environments. With the development of distance education and e-learning, it is essential for educators and administrators to pay great attention to online learning readiness. In the open textbook, the authors included a variety of instructional resources and learning activities to equip students with the needed knowledge in basic online learning skills, which is helpful to fill the gap. However, one textbook or workshop is not enough. It is also critical for instructors to embed this training into their course design and delivery to allow students to practice these skills in an authentic learning environment, helping students grow up as successful online learners. In conclusion, the open textbook is valuable, and I will recommend other institutions reuse, revise, and remix it according to their specific needs and contexts.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

AUTHOR AFFILIATION

Xinyue Ren  orcid.org/0000-0002-1042-0100
Ohio University, US

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