

## Role of Instructor in Online Education



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### ABSTRACT

As we enter the digital era in 21<sup>st</sup> century, our lives are very much more affected by digital devices like Computer, Laptop, Tab, Smart phone, etc. There is a technological transformation in every sector. Education is not an exception. With the introduction of Open Educational resources like Wikipedia, Wikieducator, etc. the world has become a digital library. So this transformed education field from traditional teaching to online education. With the introduction of MOOCs & SWAYAM in India, online education got pace now. Students & teachers can utilize a variety of devices like computer, laptop, Tab, Smartphone with the help of internet.

**Keywords :** Online Education, Role of Instructor, Pedagogical, Social, Managerial & Technical.

### INTRODUCTION

Online education is electronically supported learning that relies on the Internet for teacher / student interaction and the distribution of class materials. Hence both learner and teacher must have a computer / Smartphone with a reliable Internet connection. The classes, content, teachers, learners, examinations, etc. are available through internet. Students can get e-lectures, e-demonstrations, and e-illustrations of eminent scholars from anywhere in the world through internet. Learners can get answers of their questions from teachers. For effective teaching, the teacher can use e-boards and e-pens for graphical representation. Learners will respond through e-notes and e-assignments. For the advancement of knowledge, both of them can use e-books and e-library.

In online education, learning involves two types of interaction. They are:

- **Interaction with the content:** Interaction with the content happens through multimedia material, e-lectures, e-demonstrations, e-instruction of eminent personalities by internet. The online education programme can offer more content on a subject than the traditional education program.
- **Interpersonal Interaction:** The Inter-personal interaction is possible between students and teachers & also among the students with one another by e-mail, voice-chat and video-chat. The success of online education depends upon the Instructors attitude, motivation and true commitment. High quality online instruction promotes discovery, integration, application and practices.

**Role of Instructor:** The role of Instructor in online education is a facilitator, mentor and coach. The online instructor has to play many roles for successful

online teaching. J. C. Laurence classified the role of instructor into four categories. They are Pedagogical role, Social Role, Managerial role and Technical role. Let us discuss in detail.

### I. Pedagogical Role

The role of instructor in online-education has become more of facilitator than a traditional lecturer. He has to select and filter the information for student-consideration, to provide thought-provoking questions on critical concepts, principles and skills, and to facilitate healthy discussion among the participants. Some general rules are given below for the successful performance of pedagogical role.

1. **Clear objectives:** The instructor should have clear objectives in mind about the entry and terminal behaviour of the learners. He has to mention clearly the learning outcomes in behavioural terms while registering the learner for the above.
2. **Maintain Flexibility:** The learners are heterogeneous in online education. Hence the courses should be flexible to cater the individual differences. The instructor should not play an "authoritative role" and he has to fulfill the needs of learners. Instead of giving a long lecture, start with conversation while guiding it towards the subject.
3. **Encourage Participation:** Adopt various learning activities to encourage student participation such as small group discussion, debates, polling activities, one to one message exchanges etc. The instructor should provide opportunities for private conversations between two or more people who have similar interests in the subject by chat through Whatsapp or Messenger, Webconference, Blogs, e-mail, etc.
4. **Simple Assignments:** Mostly the online learners are separated by geographical distances. Hence to increase the rapport among the participants assign them a group assignment which is very simple. Because a complicated assignment may lead to increase the differences between participants due to their heterogeneity (they differ in their age, cultural background, previous knowledge, maturity .etc.)
5. **Invite Visiting faculty:** The instructor may request an expert in a particular field to join the conference with students on a particular date & time (prefixed time). The students may interact with him and ask questions.
6. **Request responses:** The instructor may ask a question / comment on a topic. If there is no immediate response from the learners, give them time to respond, for example 'within one day' or 'two days' or 'one week'.
7. **Don't Lecture:** A long detailed and logical presentation by lecture produces boredom and silence among participants. Hence the lecture can be made more effective and interesting by adding animations, graphics and videos. Summarize the content at the end of lecture and send them in textual form with references.
8. **Don't rely on offline materials:** While suggesting references to the learners in a particular subject, don't suggest offline materials such as printed books, journals, encyclopedias. It will be very difficult to assess the printed material as the learners are located at different places, states, countries and continents.

### II. Social Role

The Teacher in online education should instigate discussion through questions. He has to create a friendly and social environment among the learners

to continue the discussion and group activities. He has to develop human relationships, maintain unity among the group members / learners and help them to work together with mutual understanding. Hence the guidelines mentioned below may help online instructors to perform their social role successfully.

1. **Introduction:** The instructor should introduce himself in the beginning of a course so that the learners can understand better about his teacher and get confidence upon him. He should also encourage the learners to introduce themselves, so that they can understand each other and build the sense of community.
2. **Promote Interactivity:** The interactivity among the learners may be promoted by using special introductory techniques, dyadic partnering and simple group assignments.
3. **Reinforce the desired behaviour:** The learners who respond effectively should be given positive reinforcement by saying 'Excellent', 'very good', "good" etc. It is helpful to elicit more desired responses from a particular learner and encourages other inactive or least-active members to respond in time.
4. **Sense of humour:** The instructor should observe the conversation among the group members. He may advise participants to avoid humour and sarcasm as there is a chance of misunderstanding due to different cultural, social and moral backgrounds of the learners.
5. **Accept Lurkers:** In the online teaching-learning process there will be some lurkers (hiding learners) and they never participate in group activities. But they may be learning by listening to others. The instructor has to accept the lurkers and latecomers.
6. **Expect some Flames:** Sometimes participants may breach code of conduct and attack with hard or

vulgar language. If it happens during the conference, the instructor should react immediately and should remind those people privately about the computer abuse.

### III. Managerial Role

Rather than class-room teaching Teacher is a stage setter, felicitator and mentor in the process of online learning. He has to fix a time table, send the instructional material, initiate and lead the discussion, encourage the group communication among the learners etc. Besides teaching, he has to play role of a manager in online instruction. The following guidelines may help to perform their managerial role respectively.

1. **Preparation:** With the experience of present online instructors, it is found that planning online instruction, developing a course material and get acquainted with new software needs a lot of time. Hence the instructor should make ready all the required things before beginning of the course. He may conduct a few online classes with small group on experimental basis and rectify the logjams.
2. **Administrative responsibilities:** the online instructor has to provide information about admission procedure, entry behaviour, course objectives, student counselling, normal activities, answers to student's queries etc. If he fails to provide such details in time which may lead to learners outburst.
3. **List of participants:** A participant's list with few details would be made available to all learners so that interpersonal communication takes place among them. Such a list is also useful to the instructor to send private messages.

4. **Course Objectives:** The objectives of the course and desired behavior changes from the students should be conveyed clearly and briefly.
5. **Informality:** The instructor should encourage informality depend upon the objectives of the course. Ex. Grammar and typing abilities are much less important than conveying their meaning in the communication process.
6. **Patience:** The learners may or may not respond in the initial days as they will take some time to adjust in the new learning environment. Hence the instructor should be prepared to wait for several days to get proper responses. But the instructor shouldn't rush to fill the gap with his comments.
7. **Prompting:** The instructor can request participants by private messages to initiate debates, join in the discussion and to make suggestions.
8. **Responsiveness:** The instructor should respond immediately for each contribution by learners by sending a private message with own comments. In some courses it is better to respond many with one answer.
9. **Participant's contribution:** If there is any talkative or garrulous respondent in a conference, ask him to wait for few minutes. In the same way encourage silent or less spoken individuals to participate in the discussion actively.
10. **Leadership:** the instructor should initiate discussion with the learners. He should lead the discussion focusing on the content with real life experiences, but prevent any frustrating or diverting discussions.
11. **Student Leaders:** Recognize the intelligent, talkative and active learners in the group and assign the duty of leading a discussion. Recognize

such participants by content, skill, knowledge and attitude.

#### IV. Technical Role

If a learner is suffering from a technical problem, he can't concentrate on academic work. Hence before catering online education the instructor should provide technical support to the learners and assure that the learners feel comfort with the system and software to be used for the instruction. These points are essential for effective performance of technical role.

1. **Study guide:** a study guide or Course guidelines which contains general information about syllabus (theory & practical) and technical aspects (system requirement & software) should be prepared and distributed to learners preferably in PDF format. The book should provide introductory information about description of course activities, resource material, points for discussion, the course components, system requirements, the software being used for online instruction, login process, evaluation etc.
2. **Provide time to learn:** Learners should be given enough time to learn and use features of new software. Provide technical support to new users so that they attain confidence with the technology before commencement of the instruction. He has to send a weblink to join the group in a prefixed time through e-mail, whatsapp or other social media.
3. **Technical support:** A face-to-face induction programme with one or two practical sessions should be conducted to make new users comfortable with the new technology. But it may not be possible for all users.

Before the conference begins the instructor should select a staff for technical support that is required

beyond his skills level. He has to assist the learner's technical problems through mobile, chat or e-mail during the presentation.

4. **Feedback:** The instructor has to ask immediate feedback especially to solve technical problems. He has to develop innovative online feedback device to assess the students work. He should know how to make corrections online to student's notes, assignments and project work.
5. **Encourage peer learning:** Encourage new users to work with more experienced peers so that they can solve many problems at student level.

## V. CONCLUSION

The Information and Communication Technology changed the world we live in. Hence we have to adopt various ICT devices to cater the needs of learners. The Online education is one of the best option to cater the needs of ... Teacher besides possessing mastery over his subject has to master the skills to manage online teaching learning activities. He should understand pedagogical, social, technical and managerial roles. He should encourage students to actively use online education to learn beyond classroom for professional development.

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