

Converting face-to-face training to online classes: learned lessons from an instructional design perspective

M. Cristina Fernández T.

Unikemia

Oswaldo Lorenzo Ochoa

Unikemia & Deusto Business School.

Abstract

Across the world, Covid-19 has accelerated the need for universities and businesses to switch their face-to-face training to a remote-learning model. It sounds simple, but this transformational process requires the development of organizational capabilities and the implementation of a method and best practices. To support this transformation, a team of academics, instructional designers, technical specialists, and other roles needs to work collaboratively with the targeted set of instructors.

This article describes the aggregated set of learned lessons by an Edtech startup during the process of supporting three different organizations in their journey to convert face-to-face training to online classes. The first organization is an institution at the higher education level (e.g., executive education, postgraduates, etc.). The second organization is an institution providing education at the technical level for the construction sector. The third organization is the learning and development department of a corporation transforming its one-year training program for the manufacturing area.

Working in the education arena now can be a challenging task. It implies the development of innovative training solutions as quickly as possible, the rise of instructors' capabilities to understand new teaching technology and methodologies, and the support of students to quickly adapt to a new learning mode. Instructional design plays a fundamental role to guide and shape this transformation.

This article is the result of an action research project. Action research is a mode of inquiry in which (a) the researcher can incorporate actions for the solution of a problem being investigated and (b) the researcher must look back to the action to reflect on it and to contribute theory to the body of knowledge (McNiff et al., 2003; Coughlan and Coughlan, 2002; Stringer, 1999). Thus, the action research approach comprises both solving a problem and contributing to science (Coughlan and Coughlan, 2002). Action research has contributed much to the educational arena (Ferrance, 2000).

A summary of main findings is as follows: (a) instructional design for online classes helped instructors to meticulously organize the learning process. In particular, the correct distribution of asynchronous and synchronous activities, and the assessment activities during the learning process; (b) The first design for a significant number of instructors was based on the extensive use of live online classes based on videoconferences. There were several difficulties to prepare self-study materials with focused learning objectives; (c) collaborative learning helped instructors to share experiences and improve the engagement; (d) the academic approach to explain the application of new technological features into the instructional design was considered a particularly useful and effective method.

Keywords: online education; instructional design; action research; learning and development; methodologies.