

Online Education: Global Questions, Local Answers, by Kelli Cargile Cook and Keith Grant-Davie (Eds.). Amityville, NY: Baywood Publishing Company, 2005. 336 pp.

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Kelli Cargile Cook and Keith Grant-Davie's collection of essays *Online Education: Global Questions, Local Answers* answers several questions about online education in professional communication. The collection is aimed at three major groups involved in online education programs—teachers, designers and developers, and administrators—giving them pedagogically sound answers to questions about developing and implementing online education courses. As the title suggests, the collection claims to answer questions that are global in nature, questions that “transcend the particular situations of individual institutions” (p. 2). A common thread throughout is the focus on driving online education with pedagogically sound theory.

The collection speaks well to its intended audiences because it can be useful for both newcomers and veterans of online education. For someone new to online education, the collection follows a linear and logical progression through the creation and implementation of online learning programs. A seasoned veteran in the field may see the collection as a reference guide for scholarship on particular issues. In both cases, however, the collection effectively meets its intended purpose of providing pedagogically sound answers to global questions about online education.

Although the collection focuses primarily on technical communication, business communication scholars and practitioners will also find it valuable. Online training courses have become increasingly popular in the business arena, and distance education courses are offered at most business schools. As a practitioner, I have worked in developing and facilitating online courses for businesses and corporations, and this collection serves as a solid reference point for creating and facilitating such courses.

One of the strengths of the collection is the overall organization. Cook and Davie include 18 articles grouped into four sections, each of which

addresses a different global question, with a focus on learning theory and its relationship to online learning. Nearly all of the articles, to some extent, address the importance of a pedagogically driven and theoretically grounded view of online education. By drawing comparisons between the two settings, the authors show the potential of online education and the ways that it can be as effective as traditional education.

The chapters represent a good mix of general background information and specific techniques with research-based answers to specific questions. The first section answers the question, “How do we create and sustain online programs and courses?” and includes articles that place online education in a historical context. Among the four articles in the first section is Kelli Cargile Cook’s “An Argument for Pedagogy-Driven Online Education,” which traces the development of online education. This article provides an extensive historical background about the development of online education and seamlessly moves into the area of developing a pedagogy-driven online course. It provides a solid framework that identifies essential steps in creating such a course: (a) defining course goals and delivery methods, (b) defining activities for goal achievement, (c) evaluating assessment opportunities for course goals, (d) choosing technologies that support the course’s pedagogical goals activities and assessment strategies, and (e) considering student needs in terms of goals, activities, and technologies.

Other articles in this section include Marjorie Davis’s “Applying Technical Communication Theory to the Design of Online Education,” Angela Eaton’s “Students in the Online Technical Communication Classroom,” and Carolyn Rude’s “Strategic Planning for Online Education: Sustaining Students, Faculty, and Programs.”

The second section addresses the question, “How do we create interactive, pedagogically sound online courses and classroom communities?” Although both of the first two sections address creating pedagogically sound courses, the second focuses more on applying specific methods to improve online education. This section includes six articles, including, for example, Nancy Coppola’s “Changing Roles for Online Teachers of Technical Communication,” which offers an examination of her personal experience with the development of an online education course. Coppola’s article is aimed at teachers of technical communication and their changing roles in online teaching: cognitive, affective, and managerial. Her main argument, a vital one for teachers of professional communication in my view, is that the roles “enacted by instructors in traditional settings are also enacted in online environments, though each of these roles is transformed”

(p. 97). The article appropriately concludes with a section discussing future changes in online teaching roles.

Also in this section are Helen Grady and Marjorie Davis's "Teaching Well Online With Instructional and Procedural Scaffolding," Locke Carter and Rebecca Rickley's "Mind the Gap(s): Modeling Space in Online Education," Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch's "Enhancing Online Collaboration: Virtual Peer Review in the Writing Classroom," Susan Lang's "Replicating and Extending Dialogic Aspects of the Graduate Seminar in Distance Education," and Mark Zachry's "Paralogy and Online Pedagogy."

The third section answers the question, "How should we monitor and assess the quality of online courses and programs?"—thereby shifting the focus from creating online courses to assessing them. Cook and Grant-Davie's article "Online Course and Instructor Evaluation" addresses the importance of assessment in online education and provides six benchmarks for evaluating both online and traditional classroom college-level courses. They point out the similarities and differences between the two settings, noting, for example, that "online learning requires a different kind of student discipline . . . and more time-constricted activities" and that "students possess access to technology" (p. 232). The authors describe in some depth the different types of course evaluations, including student evaluations of their instructors and courses, peer and administrator evaluations, and instructor self-reports, and also discuss the content that should be included in each type of evaluation.

Four other articles in this section address issues of assessment and quality control, including "Students' Technological Difficulties in Using Web-Based Learning Environments" by Philip Reubens and Sherry Southard, "Activity Theory and the Online Technical Communication Course: Assessing Quality in Undergraduate Online Education" by Kristin Walker, "An Assignment Too Far: Reflecting Critically on Internships in an Online Master's Program" by Keith Grant-Davie, and "Assessing Student Interaction in the Global Classroom Project: Visualizing Communication and Collaboration Patterns Using Online Transcripts" by Cassie Avery, Jason Civjan, and Aditya Johri.

The final section addresses the question, "How is online education challenging our assumptions?" In "Extreme Pedagogies: When Technical Communication Vaults Institutional Barriers," Billie Wahlstrom and Linda Clemens discuss the current state of many technical communication programs and also suggest ways to change how many programs view online learning, particularly to confront a reluctance to adopt technology for teaching purposes. The authors suggest that "we must stop thinking of technology and saying 'it doesn't work as well as face-to-face'" and that "we must

consider what we can do differently in order to use the potential of technology” (p. 316). Thus, they argue that technical communicators must shift their assumptions about online education and focus on the ways to implement and improve it.

The other two articles in this section are “The Global Classroom Project: Troublemaking and Troubleshooting” by TyAnna Herrington and Yuri Tretyakov and “Knowledge Politics: Open Sourcing Education” by Brenton Faber and Johndan Johnson-Eilola.

Dividing the book into four sections makes the collection highly accessible to a wide range of audiences. For example, an instructor or administrator looking to control the quality of online courses in their university would refer to section 3, where they would find several frameworks for creating benchmarks for assessment.

As can be seen from the descriptions above, some chapters in the collection are oriented specifically toward curricula in technical communication. However, a number of the other chapters address issues that are of interest to faculty, course developers, and administrators in other types of writing programs as well, including business communication. For example, chapter 8, “Enhancing Online Collaboration: Virtual Peer Review in the Writing Classroom,” provides an especially interesting perspective for business communicators as it outlines strategies for conducting virtual peer reviews. Although the author speaks of the advantages of conducting virtual peer reviews in the writing classroom, the strategies can be applied to the business realm as well. Many business environments require the submission of major deliverables to management, whether they be a midterm report or a business proposal, and virtual peer review would provide those submitting such reports nearly immediate feedback.

Although the collection is highly successful at fulfilling its intended purpose, I might have wished to see a bit more of an overview to each section, providing more of a context to readers who may be unfamiliar with the concepts. Although each section was briefly described in the overall introduction of the collection, I believe that if each section were separately introduced, the distinction between sections could be more easily seen. The first two sections seemed to answer highly similar questions on creating online courses. The first section answers the question, “How do we create and sustain online programs and courses?” whereas the second section answers the question, “How do we create interactive, pedagogically sound online courses and classroom communities?” Although it is obvious that the second section focuses on creating pedagogically sound courses, there are articles in the first section that address this as well. By including an

introduction to each section that briefly discusses exactly what the section is addressing and who would benefit from exploring the section, the apparent ambiguity could be eliminated.

Overall, however, Kelli Cargile Cook and Keith Grant-Davie's collection of essays on online education provides a comprehensive look at the topic, providing answers to some "global questions" about important issues in online education. Teachers, course designers and developers, and administrators in any area of professional communication will find much value here.

—Christopher Lam
Illinois Institute of Technology

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