Building a Conceptual Framework for
Online Educator Dispositions

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Abstract:

It has been argued that online instruction is distinctive from the conventional classroom. If an effective online practice is to emerge, the roles, characteristics and dispositions of the educators themselves should be studied more closely. The aim of this paper was to present an online educator dispositions model that addresses the underlying dimensions of the online educator's dispositions and presence by reviewing and distilling scholarship on effective online instructional practice into a conceptual framework. The framework may be used in developing instruments for self-assessment and evaluation, as well as for research and inquiry into the desirable traits and characteristics of online educators. The presented conceptual framework for online educator dispositions could benefit all who are involved in supporting quality online education, in an effort to develop and impactful online practice that aligns with the corresponding educational needs, services, and resources.

Keywords: Online educators, online instruction, dispositions, online presence, online educator characteristics

INTRODUCTION

Online learning has become a staple in higher education. Allen and Seaman (2013) in conjunction with the Online Learning Consortium report that "the proportion of chief academic leaders that say online learning is critical to their long-term strategy is now at 69.1 percent – the highest it has been for this ten-year period" (p. 4). An in-depth and nuanced body of literature exist discussing student learning, performance and success in relation to a wide variety of factors, but in comparison, a much smaller body of scholarship addresses the characteristics and dispositions of online educators (Bolliger & Erichsen, 2013). As Maor (2003) put forward, "If e-moderating is indeed a new type of instruction, then there is a pressing need to revisit the role of the online instructor." (p. 354). In the same vein, Bonk, Kirkley, Hara, and Dennen (2001) note, as the very fabric of higher education evolves, so too must our understanding of the characteristics and traits of efficacious online educators.

Appel (2006) purports that the basic functions of teaching, learning, and communication are fundamentally different in online learning ecologies, asking the pivotal question, "What is the role of the online instructor?" (p. 2). The benefits of the online learning environment with its geographic and temporal flexibility for both learners and instructors is often emphasized, however, Rose (2012) emphasizes that "it takes a special set of skills and attitudes to excel at it" (p. 28). Cook (2007) avers we often function under the assumption that learning discourse in online learning ecologies is similar to that of the conventional classroom, and we underestimate the essential differences. Hewett and Ehmann (2004) concur, arguing that the learning environments as well as the roles learners and instructors play are fundamentally different online.

In light of these essential differences, we seek a more refined and nuanced understanding of virtual instructor personas, what we will be terming *online educator dispositions*, as

represented by identified characteristics, beliefs, and behaviors of current online educators. In this paper, a more detailed model for online educator dispositions that is comprised of a matrix including three domains of online presence in conjunction with primary aspects of educator dispositions, as a means for further exploring and supporting our understandings of the roles of not only supporting online students, but also developing exemplary educators within online learning ecologies.

Further developing our understandings of these virtual differentia may promote reflexivity within the professional development of aspiring and existing online educators. An extension of this goal not only would be to provide a conceptual framework of online educators' role(s), but also to facilitate their self-assessment, where they can continue identifying strengths and weaknesses and developing their online teaching style toward a more reflective and impactful practice. In this paper, a conceptual model based on online learning literature was developed and will be presented below, illuminating how the research and literature pertaining to dimensions of effective online instruction were distilled into domains and aspects of online educator dispositions.

Effective Instruction in Virtual Higher Education

As a jumping of point, literature pertaining to "effective" online instruction within higher education were reviewed (Abdous, 2011; Alvaraez, Guasch, & Espasa, 2009; Baran, Correia, & Thompson, 2011; Carril, Sanmamed, & Selles, 2013; Hung, Chou, Chen, & Own, 2010; Yuksel, 2009). Bangert (2006) suggests looking back to the components of the classic theoretical model for effective postsecondary instruction as outlined by Chickering and Gameson (1991). They suggested that student success is related to instruction that encourages: 1) student-faculty contact; 2) cooperation among students; 3) active learning; 4) prompt feedback; 5) time on task;

6) high expectations; and 7) respect for diverse ways of learning. Feldman (2007) revisited the idea of utilizing student ratings to identify dimensions of exemplary postsecondary teaching, and found the following (in descending order as correlated with student achievement): teacher's preparation; clarity and understandableness; perceived outcome or impact of instruction; teacher's stimulation of interest in the course and subject matter; teacher's encouragement of questions and discussion, and openness to opinions of others; teacher's availability and helpfulness; teacher's elocutionary skills; clarity of course objectives and requirements; teacher's knowledge of the subject; teacher's sensitivity to, and concern with, class level and progress; teacher's enthusiasm (for subject and for teaching); teacher's fairness, impartiality of evaluation of students, quality of examinations; intellectual challenge and encouragement of independent thought (by teacher and the course); teacher's concern and respect for students, friendliness of the teacher; nature, quality, and frequency of feedback from the teacher to students.

While these components are broadly relevant in postsecondary instruction, Relan and Gilliani (1997) proffer that online learning is distinctive and is dependent on different conditions than conventional instruction. McCombs and Vakili (2005) submit four factors that contribute to effective online instruction, including student—instructor interaction, student-centered learning environment, time-on-task, and quality, interactive learning activities. Chua and Lam (2007) emphasize pedagogical interaction, personalization, pluralism of learning methods, and monitoring and feedback. Kyong-Jee and Bonk's (2006) synthesis concludes that teaching strategies, course design, and online teaching skills are all important for the quality of online education. And echoing these, Pelz (2004) found that educators who become exemplary online teachers tend to create carefully designed online courses that promote cognitive, social, and

teacher presence. Table 1 lists common descriptors pulled from the literature and empirical studies on effective online instruction.

Mioduser, Nachmias, Lahav, and Oren (2000) identified and described a taxonomy of Web-based learning environments consisting of "100 variables categorized into four dimensions that can be considered for research purposes: (1) the descriptive dimension; (2) the pedagogical dimension; (3) the knowledge dimension; and (4) the communication dimension" (p. 292). Bonk, Kirkley, Hara, and Paz Dennen (2001) also named four major roles of the online instructor—*pedagogical, social, managerial, and technological*. Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, and Archer (2001) describe a model which presents three core domains of importance for learning in an online instructional community, namely, (1) cognitive presence, (2) teaching presence, and (3) social presence. For the purposes of developing a model for online educator dispositions, this model outlining three forms of online presence will be adopted as the foundation for identifying online educator disposition domains.

Table 1

Descriptors of effective online instruction derived from the literature.

Cognitive Presence	Pedagogical Presence	Social Presence
Intellectual Style:	**Conscientiousness:**	**Social Intelligence:**
Confident in expertise	Motivated	People oriented
Self-efficacy	Self-regulation/directed	Extroverted
Self-competence	Low requirement for structure	Patient
Independent	Consistent	Fair
Self sufficient	Persistent	Inclusive
Can suspend self-criticism	Perseverance	Welcomes diversity of people
Ability to self-assess	Follow-through	and learning styles
Tolerance for ambiguity	"Stick-to-itness"	Can work through conflict
Willingness to change	Tough-mindedness	Collaborative
Willingness to learn	Results oriented	Interpersonal competencies
Adaptability	Responsible	Inspires others

Flexibility	Planner	Understands others

Zeal:	**Organizational Style:**	**Emotional Intelligence:**
Interested in learning	Sets realistic timelines	Empathic
Creative	Punctual	Shows compassion
Excited/enthusiastic/passionate	Prioritizes effectively	Ethic of care
Committed/dedicated to teaching	Detail oriented	Emotional stability
Committed/dedicated to subject	Ability to pace self and course	Considerate of others

Learning Style:	**Teaching Style:**	**Communication Style:**
Verbal/Text-driven	Informal	Clear
Intrapersonal competencies	Not authoritative/controlling	Honest
Self-directed	Facilitative	Open
Diligent	Concrete sequential/organized	Direct/Assertive
		Responsive
		Respectful

Online Presence and Immediacy

While the term *disposition,* per se, is not common in the literature in the field of online learning, the notions of online presence are, which parallel the idea that particular competencies, attitudes, and habits of practice contribute to higher quality learning experiences. Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, and Archer (2001) defined *presence* as "the ability of learners to project themselves socially and affectively into a community of inquiry" (p. 1). Three main threads can be identified in the literature regarding the roles and effective habits of practice in the online environment. Aside from acceptance of innovations and inclination to work with ICTs, *cognitive presence*, *pedagogical presence*, and *social presence* are considered critical dimensions of impactful online learning environments.

The notion of social presence can be delineated back to Merhabian's (1971) concept of *immediacy*, which Andersen (1979) extended to the notion of *teacher immediacy*, which is

described as a teacher's communication behaviors that reduce social and psychological distance between teachers and learners and enhance communicative and nonverbal interaction. Short and colleagues (1976) took up the notion of presence in relation to technology-mediated communication and defined social presence as "the salience of the other in a mediated communication and the consequent salience of their interpersonal interactions" (p. 65). Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, and Archer (2001) define teaching presence as "the design, facilitation, and direct instruction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes" (p. 5).

Edwards, Perry and Janzen (2011) assert, "To develop quality online teachers, we need to understand what makes online educators not only effective but also exemplary and to consider changes face-to-face teachers need to make in order to succeed in the online milieu" (p. 102). It is necessary to know what dimensions of online educational practice are important in developing quality online learning. Online teacher roles identified in the literature include pedagogue, facilitator, instructional designer, social organizer, manager, and ICT troubleshooter (Baran, Correia & Thompson, 2011). A number of similar online teacher roles can be discerned from the literature including professional, pedagogical, social, evaluator, administrator, technologist, advisor/counselor, and researcher (Anderson et al., 2001; Bawane and Spector, 2009; Berge, 2009; Coppola, Hiltz, & Rotter 2002; Gausche, Alvarez & Espasa, 2010; Goodyear, Salmon, Spector, Steeples & Tickner, 2001; Salmon, 2004; Smith, 2005; Williams, 2003). Bawane & Spector, (2009) assert that virtual educators are required to possess a diverse set of competencies and the ability to apply them in shifting contexts (Abdous, 2011; Alvaraez, Guasch, & Espasa, 2009; Baran, Correia, & Thompson, 2011; Carril, Sanmamed, & Selles, 2013; Hung, Chou, Chen, & Own, 2010; Yuksel, 2009).

Dispositions

Research and discourse pertaining to teacher dispositions is found primarily in literature in K-12 education, where "dispositions indicate a teacher's tendency to act effectively on the behalf of the learning and well-being of his or her students" (Carroll, 2012, p. 38). Ennis (1987) defined dispositions as a tendency to behave in particular ways under given conditions. Buss and Craik (1983) demarcated dispositions as "summaries of act frequencies" (p. 7). Katz's (1993) notion of teacher disposition builds on their work and defines a *disposition* as an "attributed characteristic of a teacher, one that summarizes the trend of a teacher's actions in particular contexts" (p. 301).

The notion of dispositions, however, not only represents a summary of behaviors, but also an individual's beliefs, values, and other personality traits. Two threads of discourse can be identified when looking into definitions for dispositions in education (Thorton, 2006). The first (Campbell, 2008; Eberly, Rand, & O'Conner, 2007; Notar, Riley, & Taylor, 2009; Singh & Stoloff, 2007) is axiological in nature where "approaches to assessing teacher dispositions often loosely equate to values, beliefs, attitudes, characteristics, professional behaviors and qualities, ethics, and perceptions" (Ritchhart, 2001, p. 54). The second thread is more behaviorist, focused on identifiable patterns of behaviors such as work attendance, preparation, work ethic, punctuality, sense of humor, and appropriate dress (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2004). Dispositions have also been discussed as affective qualities (Combs, 1969; Usher, 2002), including empathy, or the ability to understand and accept another person's point of view; a positive view of others, or believing in the worth, ability, and potential of others; positive view of self, or believing in the worth, ability, and potential of oneself; authenticity, or having a sense of freedom and openness that allows one to be a unique person in honesty and genuineness; and meaningful purpose and

vision, or having a commitment to purposes that are person-centered, broad, deep, freeing, and long range in nature (Usher, 2002). These qualities are more akin to common measures of self-efficacy and emotional and social intelligences.

Dispositions are understood to be the enactment of a person's personal traits, values, and behaviors in a consistent manner within particular contexts (Burant, Chubbuck, & Whipp, 2007; Carroll, 2012). Ritchhart (2001) emphasizes the active nature of dispositions, proposing that "dispositions represent characteristics that animate, motivate, and direct abilities toward good and productive thinking and are recognized in the patterns of one's frequently exhibited, voluntary behavior...." (p. 55). Many authors refer to Siegel's (1999) view of dispositions described as "a tendency, propensity, or inclination to behave in a certain way under certain circumstances" (p. 208). These are the patterns of thinking and how one is disposed to act and how these manifest themselves regularly through instructor's actions in the learning environment. If we think of this in terms of praxis, it is the marriage of theories and personal traits and values with action and habits of being.

Social Interaction Theory

For the purpose of the conceptual model as presented here, social interaction theory (Vygotsky, 1978) is understood to be the mechanism that drives each of the domains and levels of dispositions as they will be defined below. It is through social interaction within the learning environment that an individual's personality, beliefs and common behaviors are manifested within the context of online instruction, and become the substance within the cognitive, pedagogical, and social domains of instruction. Understanding that social interactions are the grist and goad of a learning ecology, a focus on interpersonal interactions within a virtual learning community, illuminating interactions between instructor-student, student-student, and

student-content, renders the patterns of an online educator's dispositions more recognizable.

Developing an approach that emphasizes social interaction, which focuses on the types and

forms of interactions in the virtual learning environment that comprise cognitive, pedagogical

and social presence, may be the make or break of online education, in addition to the perplexities

of learning how to engage in social interaction within an electronic environment (Yang &

Cornelious, 2005). Garrison and Cleveland-Innes (2005) summarize well in saying:

> The findings are consistent with the literature discussed previously in that the nature of
>
> the interaction and teaching presence are crucial for deep approaches to learning. This
>
> suggests that the quality of interaction (i.e., critical discourse) must be a specific design
>
> goal and interaction facilitated and directed in a sustained manner if deep approaches to
>
> learning are to be achieved. To be clear, social interaction is necessary to establish
>
> relationships and to create a secure climate that will provide the foundation for a deep
>
> and meaningful educational experience. (p. 144)

Identifying and examining interactive behaviors and indicators of each form of presence in the

online learning environment may help researchers and practitioners develop more poignant

strategies in facilitating deeper and more meaningful learning experiences.

One may think of the term dispositions as the process of developing a repertoire and

identity of practice, what Blythe and associates (1998) term *performances of understanding*. It is

the process in which instructors engage in the intellectual, cultural, ethical, and social actions and

practices necessary to become effective educators. Schussler, Stooksberry and Bercaw (2005)

see the combination of these as the development of an educator disposition that an instructor is

increasingly able to enact with flexibility and intentionality within a specific context. As Katz

(1995) states, "dispositions comprise habits of mind rather than mindless habits" (p. 90).

Summarizing this synthesis, dispositions connect values and other kinds of inner commitments with actions. They function as a process that connects valuing with strategies, or a repertoire of practice, directed with intentionality toward deliberate outcomes. Dispositions for ambitious teaching become a "reliable pattern and character of a particular educator's practice with the development of a professional identity and repertoire of practice that grow out of acting strategically, achieving desired outcomes, and recognizing oneself as a person capable of doing so" (Carroll, 2012, p. 43). Ritchhart (2001) also suggests that dispositions are situation specific: thus, the shift in the medium of instruction to the online learning environment means that the dynamics of interpersonal interactions as well as the learning environment have changed significantly. Therefore, new demands in communication and social competencies are made of virtual educators (Comeaux & McKenna-Byington, 2003).

Conceptual Framework

Coppola et al. (2002) focused on the changing pedagogical roles of virtual professors in asynchronous learning environments, reiterating the importance of the cognitive, managerial, and affective roles of a virtual educator. Teaching presence refers to "designing and managing learning sequences, providing subject matter expertise, and facilitating active learning" (Rourke et al., 2001, ¶ 2). Based on Archer, Garrison, Anderson, and Rourke's (2001) model noted above, the commonly referenced community of inquiry model (COI) was adopted here as a framework of three overlapping domains—cognitive presence, teaching presence, and social presence—that, together through social interaction, form the virtual educational experience. While the purpose of the COI model primarily pertains to developing community in online learning environments, the three dimensions of *presence* are particularly useful in helping identify the kinds of social interactions and educator dispositions that have been described as contributing to quality online

learning experiences. Notably, after reviewing the instructional components suggested for exemplary conventional postsecondary teaching, as well as the factors identified by several studies for effective online learning, these three domains provide a useful framework in conceptualizing what might be considered to be desirable online teaching dispositions, and thus will be utilized as the three intellectual bins with which to sort interactive instructional behaviors and develop dispositional constructs for online educators.

A Dispositions Model for Virtual Instruction

The roles identified in the literature for virtual educators generally include pedagogical, facilitator, instructional designer, social, managerial, and technical roles (Baran et al., 2011). *Teaching presence* is defined as an educator's ability to project themselves cognitively, pedagogically, and socially into a virtual learning community. The COI model (Archer et al., 2001; Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007) joins together key dimensions of virtual instruction including both task and interpersonal requirements in terms of cognitive, intellectual, social, affective, and interpersonal aspects, and asserts that the interconnectedness of these aspects comprises the essence of effective virtual instruction. Again, Garrison and Cleveland-Innes (2005) summarize well:

> A deep approach to learning must consider all three elements of the community of inquiry: social, cognitive, and teaching presence. The findings here suggest that neither social presence alone nor the surface exchange of information can create the environment and climate for deep approaches to learning and meaningful educational exchanges. Quality interaction and discourse for deep and meaningful learning must consider the confluence of social, cognitive, and teaching presence—that is, interaction among ideas, students, and the teacher. (p. 144)

For the purposes of further explicating an online educator dispositions model, the definitions as outlined in previous work:

> C*ognitive presence* will be understood here as 'ideas,' and more precisely defined as the interactive behaviors that contribute to meaning-making, provide content matter, offer explanation/clarification, and build ideas, understanding, and learning discourse. *Pedagogical presence* will be defined as the interactive behaviors that enhance design, organization, management, effective communication and feedback, and facilitation of active learning. *Social presence* will be defined as the interactive behaviors that reduce social distance between the instructor and learners, and between learners, and enhance social cohesion in the learning environment. (Kirwan & Roumell, 2014, p. 567)

The scope of this concept paper, then, is focused on further elaborating these three primary domains of presence required in online learning ecologies.

Disposition Domains

Based on the COI model, three key domains for educator dispositions have been identified, and each of these domains, as they pertain to online educator dispositions, will be defined below.

Domain 1: Cognitive Presence. Content expertise and the domain of cognitive presence is often treated as a given and is overlooked in favor of skillsets such as course management (the pedagogical dimensions) and developing social presence in the online learning environment. However, above cited studies (Feldman, 2007; Fengfeng, 2010; Mioduser et al., 2000) suggest that students perceive a teacher's subject area expertise and cognitive presence to be very important aspects of quality teaching.

Above, cognitive presence was defined as the interactive behaviors that contribute to meaning-making, provide content matter, offer explanation/clarification, and build ideas, understanding, and learning discourse. Within this domain, the instructional practices and individual traits that contribute to an educator's ability to clearly communicate and exhibit the content within the given learning context is taken up. An educator's content knowledge and subject area expertise are considered, as well as their ability to select and communicate relevant content effectively. Within the virtual learning environment, clearly communicating in written form is emphasized, as virtual learning tends to be heavily text-driven. Young (2006) enunciates, "Effective communication is one of the most important elements of a successful online course… Effective instructors model good communication skills and, following their example, students learn to do the same" (p. 73).

Mandernach, Donneli, and Dailey-Hebert (2006) further describe the importance of clear communication from the student perspective:

> Not only do successful students need to be able to effectively comprehend written text, they also must be effective producers of written materials. Most interactions (threaded discussion, email and chat) and assessments (homework, papers, etc.) are based on written products. Since there are limited verbal exchanges, an instructor's assessment of student learning is limited to the written documents (papers, tests, discussions, etc.) produced by the student… The role of the instructor is magnified due to the lack of informal peer-to-peer interaction and the absence of typical non-verbal cues and spontaneous discussions in a face-to-face classroom. (p. 9-10)

Where the primary medium of communication is in text form, "skilled writers obviously have an advantage online" (Comeaux & McKenna-Byington, 2003, p. 352). In an ICT mediated learning

environment, clear language and written communication is critical, requiring an educator's competence in the subject matter and an accurate understanding of the content being mediated, as well as the ability to effectively communicate that content through written text and in a variety of other medium. While spoken elocutionary skills are of less importance, subject matter expertise plus precise written communication skills make it possible for the virtual educator to effectively and generatively foster discourse within the virtual learning environment, and develop the required teacher-learner, learner-learner, and learner-content interactions for learning.

Domain 2: Pedagogical Presence. Above, *pedagogical presence* was defined as the interactive behaviors that enhance design, organization, management, effective communication and feedback, and facilitation of active learning. In addition to cognitive presence, an exemplary online educator must also establish and project their pedagogical presence into the online learning environment. Required roles of online educators include pedagogical knowledge, facilitating active learning, designing instruction, coordinating social interaction, managing the course, and troubleshooting technical issues. Familiarity with instructional design is particularly important in online education, which encompasses the planning, organizing, and structuring of elements within the online learning environment (Anderson et al., 2001). The required pedagogical competencies include instructional design and content organization, facilitating discourse and learner interaction, and direct instruction, including clarification, disambiguation, and instructor feedback, and are all crucial in developing the interaction sets that are critical for online learning.

Baran, Correia, and Thompson (2011) found that teaching presence is a significant predictor of students' perceptions of learning, their satisfaction, and their sense of learning

community. Spangle, Hodne, and Schierling (2002) examined over 1,200 student evaluations of online courses in conjunction with surveys of the instructors, establishing support for the argument that a pedagogical skillset—including well developed written communication skills, the careful design of learning activities that promote discussion, and prompt feedback—is one of the vital factors in crafting a meaningful learning experience online. Competencies in pedagogy (Arinto, 2013; Abdous, 2011; Carril, Sanmamed, & Selles, 2013; Goodyear et al., 2001), communication competencies (Williams, 2003), and course management competencies (Berge, 2009; Coppola et al., 2002; Guasch et al., 2010) all weigh in as essential skillsets in online education.

Domain 3: Social Presence. A significant body of scholarship exists concerning the importance of social presence in online learning (Asfaranjan, Shirzad, Baradari, Salimi, & Salehi, 2013; Fengfeng, 2010). Baran, Correia, and Thompson (2011) note, "The social role is one of most emphasized roles and it refers to teachers' functions related to building and improving student-teacher relationships in a virtual learning environment" (p. 429). Sitzman and Woodard Leners (2006) emphasize the affective qualities required within the domain of social presence. Effective social tendencies in the online learning environment encompass interpersonal competencies, emotional intelligence, the capacity to personalize and establish "safe" learning environments, and an ability to relate to and empathize with learners. Wlodkowski (2008) also describes individual traits and tendencies such as empathy, enthusiasm, clarity, and cultural responsiveness as necessary in providing for a safe and motivating learning environment that supports critical consciousness.

Figure 1
Domains by Personality, Beliefs, and Behaviors
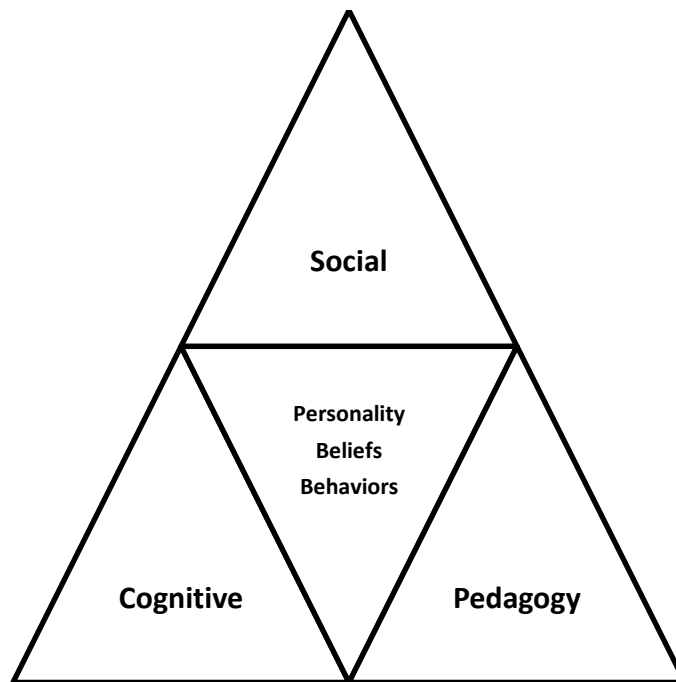
Aspects of Dispositions

People's behavior, generally speaking, is driven by their perceptions of the world. From a perceptual viewpoint, behaviors are considered corollaries of underlying personal values, beliefs, and perceptions of the world. Understanding an individual's general world perceptions provides insight into their observable behaviors. Accordingly, a person's disposition and personality are not seen as causing their behavior, but rather that a person's behaviors serve as indicators of an individual's personal traits and characteristics. For example, an educator does not praise students because she has a disposition to be supportive or an agreeable personality. Instead, we make observations of an educator who makes use of praise across contexts and on frequent occasions, and therefor describe her as having a supportive disposition or an agreeable personality. It is important to understand that the concepts of dispositions and personalities are descriptive characteristics that may entail a predictive element. Thus we may be able to establish a

relationship between descriptive behavioral characteristics and other potential behaviors. Someone who demonstrates supportive behavior over time, is more likely to be supportive the next time as well. Descriptors of effective educator behaviors, then, can be used as indices of a potentially successful repertoire of practice (Kirwan & Roumell, 2014).

Three aspects are taken into consideration in order to define an "educator disposition," including an individual's characteristics and traits, a person's values and beliefs that serve as a justification for action, and regular patterns of an individual's behavior. Together, these three aspects can help identify the inclinations and tendencies of an educator within online learning environments.

For the purpose of developing dispositional constructs within the domains of cognitive presence, pedagogical presence, and social presence in online instruction, these three aspects of dispositions will be considered, namely personality traits, beliefs pertaining to educational practice, and frequency and types of behavior.

Personality traits. There have been many theories of personality since the concept was first developed. Personality is commonly defined as a relatively complex set of traits that influence behavior across time and situation (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997; Zimbardo & Gerrig, 1996). Personality types are individual attributional factors that influence an individual's general outlook on the world, and general ways of being in the world, as well as in learning environments. Since the mid 1980's, a frequently used measure of normal personality is the five-factor model. The five-factor model (often called the Big Five or OCEAN) has been found to be a robust and broad measure of normal personality in the field of psychology (Tokar, Fischer, & Subich, 1998; Oh, Wang, & Mount, 2011). The factor structure and construct validity of the Big Five constructs (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) have

been validated and applied across a wide range of contexts (Costa & McCrae, 1994, 2011*),* including learning styles (Kirwan, Lounsbury, & Gibson, 2014*).*

Pedagogical Beliefs. An educator's general beliefs about what is "good" and worthwhile in a given learning environment greatly impact their behaviors, decisions, and actions in a learning environment. Much of the literature on online learning describes particular orientations toward learning and education that tend to be more successful than others (Burant, Chubbuck, & Whipp, 2007; Caroll, 2012), and therefore an educator's views about education are included as an aspect for consideration in the proposed dispositions model.

Patterns of Behavior. An educator's common behaviors and instructional practices are the interactive manifestations of their personality and their orientations and beliefs about good instruction. Behaviors are the externalized actions that can be observed, and thus are also valuable indicators as to how an educator is likely to behave and respond in a given situation and context.

Together, the three domains of cognitive presence, pedagogical presence, and social presence with the three dispositional aspects of personality, pedagogical beliefs, and behavioral patterns create the matrix that we are presenting here. The table below offers a summary and gestalt for the conceptualized model we have described above.

Table 2. *Dispositions Matrix: Aspects by Domain*

	Cognitive	Pedagogical	Social
Big 5 Personality Traits	Openness to Experience/Intellect	Conscientiousness Work Drive	Agreeableness Extroversion Optimism
Requisite Social Interactions	• Providing appropriate/relevant subject matter • Demonstrating expertise and depth of knowledge • Communicate comfortably and confidently in writing • Reinforcing concepts, ideas, content	• Designing learning environment • Scaffolding learning content • Managing course and learning activities • Providing quality feedback • Instigate, support, sustain critical thinking	• Inviting participation and conversation • Building trust • Respecting the wide variety of experience, learning, and ways of knowing • Attending to learners current needs
Pedagogical Beliefs/ Commitments	• Invested in academic integrity • Promotes high learning standards • Demonstrates an inquisitive, scholarly orientation • Seeks evidence and foundations for reasoning and assertions	• Conscientious management of time and information • Timeliness and responsiveness • Consistent engagement and feedback • Values congruent and fair assessment • Exhibits a code of vocational ethics	• Appreciates learner differences • Commitment to culturally relevant and inclusive materials • Commitment to cultivating a learning community • Appreciation of cultural differences
Patterns of Instructional Behavior	• Comments/arguments/ positions founded in evidence • Provides examples and evidence related to content • Relates content to real world experience • Incorporates additional material, information, resources	• Responds to questions and assertions • Gives directions and provides suggestions • Builds on and extends ideas/concepts in discussion • Requests clarification and further elaboration • Offers constructive feedback	• Expresses appreciation • Encourages learners and participation • Affirms individual and group identities • Communicates care, concern, and interest in individuals • Welcomes many forms of participation
Possible Indices	• Uses accurate language/writing conventions • Adheres to APA style • Cites and incorporates scholarly references • Provides accurate information & adequate resources	• Logs in daily • Answers emails and questions in timely fashion • Poses questions in threads • Responds to learner questions and posts • Provides prompt and detailed feedback • Develops additional guidance when needed	• Uses phatics • Uses vocatives • Uses inclusive pronouns • Offers complements and encouragement • Acknowledges individual participants • Addresses participants by name • Offers affirmation

Note: Adapted from Kirwan & Roumell, 2014.

Developing Praxis

The matrix presented above is intended to serve as a guiding framework for identifying and supporting online educator dispositions. In providing a structured way of thinking about individual traits and inclinations, personal values and commitments, patterns of behavior, and potential indices as related to online teaching practice, a framework for online educator dispositions is made available for identifying, adjusting, and refining one's practice as an online educator.

This framework could potentially be used to develop self-evaluation tools to help individuals identify possible areas for growth. Research around Holland's (1997) vocational theory has indicated that certain characteristics can be identified that predict specific person-environment interactions. An understanding of organizational behavior and characteristics that lead to stability and change in an online modality may help lead to the development of more effective methods of providing assistance to struggling employees and professional development activities for the entire faculty.

Research has shown that there is a strong relationship between personality and career and life satisfaction (Lounsbury, Saudargas, Gibson, & Leong, 2005). Having an understanding of the dispositional domains and corollary behaviors may also assist educators in choosing the modality that best suits them, or in developing potential interventions (advising, mentoring, etc.) to assist them in developing a repertoire of practice they will more likely be satisfied and do well with.

Schneider (1987) developed a framework (called the Attraction-Selection-Attrition model) to help understand the etiology of organizational behavior. This model suggests that individuals are attracted to certain work environments, and the collection of people builds the

culture. This is related to the Social Behaviorism concept of person-environment fit. By identifying the characteristics of highly satisfied and skilled online instructors, it may be easier to attract and retain educators who will function well in that modality.

CONCLUSION

It has been argued that online instruction is distinctive from the conventional classroom. If an effective online practice is to emerge, the roles, characteristics and dispositions of the educators themselves should be studied more closely. The aim of this paper was to present an online educator dispositions model that addresses the underlying dimensions of the online educator's "dispositions and presence" by reviewing and distilling scholarship on effective online instructional practice into a conceptual framework. A model for online educator dispositions provides a foundation for developing tools to help educators become empowered as autonomous and self-directed professionals who actively and consistently engage in reflective practice and work toward effective instructional strategies that are congruent with ICT mediated learning environments. The framework can also be used in developing instruments for assessment and evaluation, as well as for research and inquiry into the desirable traits and characteristics of online educators. The presented conceptual framework for online educator dispositions could benefit those involved in supporting quality online education, in an effort to develop and impactful online practice that aligns with the corresponding educational needs, services, and resources.

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