Effective Online Teaching – a book review

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Tina Stavredes' book, Effective Online Teaching published by Jossey-Bass 2011, is a welcome addition to the body of knowledge in this relatively new field. It is a comprehensive review of the myriad of things which have to be addressed if an effective Online Teaching program is to be developed by a university. There are 18 chapters in the book which cover a wide spectrum of issues ranging from reasonable technical material to Developing an Online Teaching Philosophy. It should be said that the discussion of philosophy is not the strongest aspect of the book.

The book contains a number of useful checklists and suggestions about how best to achieve various teaching objectives. Some of these are quite detailed and an experienced teacher may not require to be given advice on some of these issues. It explores among other factors the cultural differences which need to be accommodated. The book is extensively referenced. The list of authorities cited is impressive as is the Index showing the coverage of the material. The writing style is accessible even to those without a strong background in education theory.

The book is reasonably priced and available through Amazon at

http://www.amazon.co.uk/Effective-Online-Teaching-Foundations-Strategies/dp/0470578386/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1312554293&sr=1-3

The book is also offered on Kindle.

I do however have to make one comment about the thinking described of the author. In the Preface Dr Stavredes suggests that online learning can achieve *"the same learning outcomes as traditional, on-ground campuses"*. It is difficult to imagine under which circumstances this could be true. Although Online Learning which I prefer to call e-Learning is one of the most important issues facing tertiary education today it generally cannot match the learning that can be achieved at *on-ground campuses*. The demand for tertiary education has never been higher and it is bound to continue to grow. The on-ground institutions do not have the capacity to cope with the demand in the traditional way. Therefore they are turning to Online Learning which it is hoped will help with the over demand. However it is difficult to accept that Online Learning will ever be able to deliver an educational experience which can be obtained by attending live classes and being able to mingle with faculty and other students. It has been known from early times, perhaps as far back as Plato, that the best learning or perhaps education outcomes occur when the student can sit at the feet of the Masters. We have to wait until technology can deliver the promise which is implied in Star Trek Voyager i.e. the hologram doctor as a lecturer and the teleporter (Beam me up Scotty) to bring the students together. But then Star Trek is set in the future around about the date 2300 CE or something like that.

Back to the book as mentioned above Effective Online Teaching is a welcome addition to the field.