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Strategies for Virtual Learning Environments: Focusing on Teaching Presence and Teaching Immediacy

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ABSTRACT

Given advancements in technology, online learning environments have evolved from less engaging modes of delivering course content to creating a platform where learners have the opportunities to engage in active learning experiences. It is therefore beneficial to examine the views and perspectives of researchers, who view online courses as indispensable in modern educational systems and have contributed useful strategies and ideas of creating engaging online classes. The purpose of this study was to establish factors identified in previous studies that positively affect learners' engagement in virtual learning environments. The focus of the literature review was to highlight teacher presence and teacher immediacy in online class settings. Both hard copy and online searches generated relevant articles depicting various online class engagement strategies. The findings of the study suggest that teaching presence and teaching immediacy can influence learners' cognitive and affective learning experiences. The paper has implications for professional education in online teaching and learning and for educators in general. The authors identify future research areas that should contribute to the progression of the field of online learning literature in terms of teacher presence and teacher immediacy.

***Keywords*:** Online learning, teaching presence, teaching immediacy, students' learning, motivation.

INTRODUCTION

A recent survey report revealed that online student enrolment has increased drastically in past few years. "More than 6.7 million students were taking at least one online course during the fall 2011 term, an increase of 570,000 students compared to the previous year" (Allen & Seaman, 2014, p. 7). The survey also revealed that 32% of students are taking at least one online class and 77% of academic leaders rate online learning outcomes as equal or superior to that of a traditional class setting. These findings are a significant development in the academic environment. On line learning is growing at a faster rate than the overall enrollment in the higher education sector. As noted, "For the past eight years online enrollments have been growing substantially faster than overall higher education enrollments" (Allen & Seaman, 2014, p. 4). In a report entitled: *Grade Change: Tracking Online Education in the United States,* it is revealed that the number of students taking at

least one online course increased by over 44,000 to a new total of 7.1 million (Allen & Seaman, 2014). Similar trends in growth are evident in organizational settings, where online training is becoming an integral part of the success strategy (Fagan, 2014):

> [E-learning] is part of the biggest change in the way our species conducts training since the invention of the chalkboard or perhaps the alphabet. The development of computers and electronic communications has removed barriers of space and time. We can obtain and deliver knowledge anytime anywhere. (Horton, 2000, p. 6).

Online classes are consistently imparting and improving knowledge of learners separated by geographical distances. The limitless expansion beyond geographical boundaries attract a large pool of talent without incurring travel and physical expenses related to traditional face-to-face classes (Li & Irby, 2008). According to Palloff and Pratt (2007) the increase in the number of people using Internet is directly related to the greater demand of online classes. The increasing demand of technology by diverse learners separated by geographic distances is noticed by non-profit and for-profit organizations. As a result, institutions like National University, which is the second largest non-profit institute in California, offers 60% of their courses online with most of their traditional classes including online components (Silverstone & Keeler, 2013). Mgutshini (2012) summarizes this scenario related to online class environments:

Developments in computing, particularly with respect to the use of the Internet, have fueled an unprecedented growth in the use of technology-based environments within education. Notably, both distance-learning institutions, as well as conventional academic institutions have integrated a range of electronic learning environments, such as virtual discussion rooms, podcasts, virtual simulations and Twitter boards into their curricula. A number of reasons for these developments have been offered. Web-based strategies are seen as representing a revolutionary progression in learning through the flexibility of occurring anywhere, at any time and at a lesser cost than face to- face alternatives (p. 1).

Because the rapidly changing nature of technological innovation impacts the delivery of course content, the face of content delivery also changes (Calis, 2008; Chakraborty & Nafukho, 2014). Emerging technological innovations are creating scope to create interactive and flexible online learning environments. However, the shift from interactive and familiar, traditional classroom settings to virtual environments may be challenging to both the instructor and the learner. The challenges identified in the literature include: a) very limited supervision from the instructor (Mgutshini, 2012); b) inefficient use of technology (Bonk & Graham 2006); and c) lack of communication (Yang, Yeh & Wong, 2010).

Online classes offer learners the unique opportunity to reflect and research before responding to issues being discussed in class, which is different in face-to-face classes, where learners have to respond to issues sometimes without much reflection and research. (Christie, Garrote & Jurado, 2009). With the increased use of computers, cell phones, the Internet, and other wireless devices, today's learners are more connected than ever before, yet disconnected at the same time--especially from the interruptions created by mobile devise (La Roche & Flanigan, 2012). It becomes the responsibility of the course instructor to communicate with the disconnected or distracted students to increase their interaction with the course content and give them a sense of community. As La Roche and Flanigan (2012) pointed out, "The creation of a meaningful learning environment is the key to enhancing the educational experience. It is generally agreed that engaged students learn more and retain more of what they learn" (p. 47).

The Value for Learner Engagement in Virtual Learning Environments

Engagement, motivation and learning are important in both educational and organizational settings. Online classes, online learning and teaching professional development require the formation of a positive environment, where learners are capable of creating inclusive learning experiences (Keller, 2008). In this study, as mentioned earlier, the term 'organization' is used in a broader context to include both for-profit and non-profit institutions or companies.

Ally, (2004) proposed that in the global context, many multinational companies are delivering online training to their employees. Lip, Morrison and Kuprtitz (2014) proposed that "For private sector organizations, one of the most significant benefits of online instruction has been just-in-time delivery of training when employees need learning to effectively address performance problems in the workplace" (p. 28). Engaging learners in the virtual environment is identified as a challenge in organizations. Similarly, in the higher education sector, the focus is to minimize the disadvantages associated with online learning while enhancing the positive effects.

The field of human resource development advocates for equipping learners with tools that promote and support overall learning, growth and development (Nafukho, Amutabi, & Otunga, 2005, Nafukho, Wawire & Lam, 2011). The core components of human resource development, i.e. career development, training and development and organization development, focus on improving performance at both organizational and individual levels (Swanson & Holton, 2008). Therefore, performing a search for suitable **teaching presence strategies** and **teaching immediacy** will help improve learning and performance at the individual level, and also will help organizations achieve a confident and skilled workforce.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is obvious that an instructor's role in an online class environment is a significant factor for learners' successful and positive learning experiences. Teaching presence and teaching immediacy are found to be significant factors in traditional face-to-face class settings (Witt, Wheeless, & Allen, 2004). It is important to study the influences of these two important factors in an online class environment (Baker, 2010). Tudorache, Iordache and Iordache (2012) portrayed electronic learning or elearning as "a type of education where the medium of instruction is computer technology. No in-person interaction may take place in some instances. E-learning is used interchangeably in a wide variety of contexts" (p. 389). La Roche and Flanigan (2012) defined student engagement as activities that involve students' 'active cognition processes' (p. 47). Hence, creating and delivering instruction and learning activities and assignments aimed toward involving learners in online class environments is required for student engagement in an online class context. Teaching presence or instructor's presence is denoted by the role of instructors in online class environments. Designing and facilitating are ways to ensure cognitive and social learning experiences (Anderson, 2000). Again, teaching immediacy is defined in this paper as an instructor's availability as perceived by the learners (Baker, 2010).

Although authors such as Duderstadt (2012) are doubtful about the possibilities of deriving universal strategies to engage online students, Cull, Read, and Kirk (2010) optimistically found the significance of deriving and following common strategies to engage students online.

The challenge of keeping our students engaged and motivated is common across grade levels, subject matter, and all types of institutions and courses. Online courses, however, present a special concern. With students and faculty in contact only via the Internet several new challenges arise (para 1).

Grandzol and Grandzol (2006) coined that empirical evidence of best practices are the most effective in finding out strategies that help create engaging and interesting online courses. Again, Garrison, Cleveland-Innes and Fung (2010) advocated for theoretical foundation of online learning literature. "It is argued here that to advance our understanding of online learning in higher education, a coherent theoretical framework must guide investigations into the research and practice of web-based online teaching and learning" (p. 31).

Different studies highlight the importance of forming a learning community among students. Researchers suggest that a sense of community is beneficial for the students'

emotional and cognitive development (Grandzol & Grandzol, 2006). Essential to the online education experience is what various researchers have termed 'community of learners', 'knowledge-building communities', 'virtual learning communities', or 'communities of inquiry'. This concept urges course design such that students can contribute to the evolving knowledge base of the group, while developing underlying social networks within their course.

Researchers have found a significant relationship between students' sense of community and students' perceived learning (Arbaugh, 2014; Boston, 2014; Rovai, 2002; Thompson et al., 2005). Garrison suggests that teaching presence in online learning environments is an important factor influencing learners' experiences. "The consensus is that teaching presence is a significant determinate of student satisfaction, perceived learning, and sense of community" (Garrison, 2007, p. 67). Researchers acknowledge that teaching presence is positively related to students' success, students' perceived learning and sense of community (Meyer, 2003; Swan et al., 2005; Vaughan, 2004).

In this article, online learning is defined as a medium where content is delivered via the Internet. The terms online learning, e-learning, computer-based learning, distance learning and virtual learning are used synonymously in this paper. Rourke, Garrison and Archer (2001) defined teaching presence as "the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educational worthwhile learning outcomes" (p. 2). Teaching immediacy is denoted through the accessibility and availability of the instructor to the students.

PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

An extensive review of literature revealed that the recent trend in literature started to shift focus from solely finding whether online education is comparable to traditional face-to-face classes (Vroeginday, 2005). The recent work concentrates on providing strategies to engage online learners. In many professional and educational organizations, online classes are made mandatory and as a result, learning is crucial for online users. The changing learning environment along with evolving sophisticated technology necessitates following suitable strategies to engage today's learners in both educational and professional settings. The literature review assembles the strategies of teaching presence and teaching immediacy that are advocated in empirical studies performed in last 11 years. Perry and Edwards (2014) proposed that although the online literature has increased in volume, "the literature remains lacking in terms of studies focused on what makes some online educators more effective than others" (p. 1).

The purpose of this literature review is twofold: First to present the existing research addressing teaching presence and teaching immediacy in online environments, and second to identify and explore the effect of teaching presence and immediacy on students' motivation and learning highlighted in the identified review of the literature. The literature review intends to address the following research questions:

1. What role does teaching presence play on online learners' perceptions regarding virtual learning environments?

2. What role does instructors' immediacy play on online learners' experience?

METHODOLOGY

Search Process

A systematic literature review (Ridley, 2012) was conducted to address the above-mentioned research questions. The literature search was carried out on the basis of three overlapping domains: 1) teaching presence and/or teaching immediacy in online or virtual environments within educational setting. The Venn diagram below depicts the literature search process. The shaded area denotes the section of interest i.e., learners' optimal learning experiences.

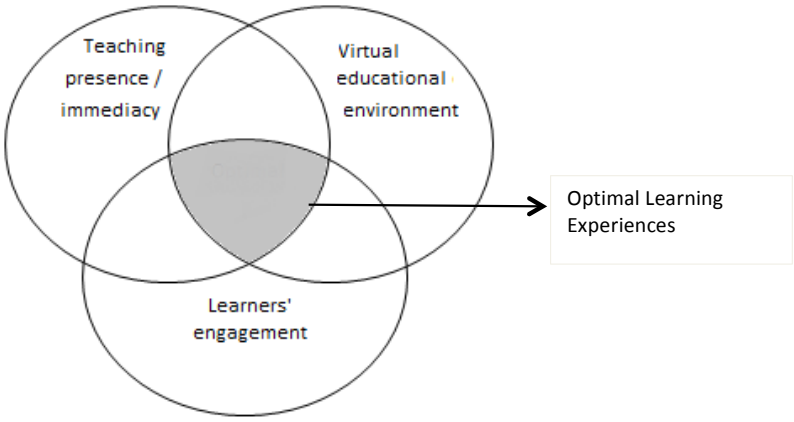

Figure 1. A Venn-Diagram illustrating the literature search process and area of interests.

Data Collection

To generate as many relevant publications as possible, the authors of this study reviewed hard copy journals and conducted online searches through various databases. The databases used included Academic Search Complete (Ebsco), Social Sciences Full Text (Wilson), ProQuest Education Journals, ProQuest Dissertation and Thesis, ProQuest Central, Social Sciences Citation Index (ISI), ERIC (Ebsco), SAGE Full Text Collection (CSA), Google Scholar, Emerald, and SAGE. The following keywords were used: Teaching presence, instructors' presence, teachers' immediacy, learners' affective learning, cognitive learning, learner's motivation, online learning, virtual learning, elearning, distance education, online training, e-training, virtual training, online class engagement, students' satisfaction and learner engagement.

The keyword searches yielded the following journals: *CyberPsychology and Behavior, Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism, Journal of Social Issues, Journal of European Industrial Training, Journal of Organizational Behavior, Personality and Individual Differences, Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, Advances in Developing Human Resources, Business Horizon, AAOHN Journal, and Applied Psychology.*

The initial search resulted 3563 articles. Considering the change in technology and as a result change in approach towards online courses, articles published within ten years (2003 to 2013) were included in the literature review. Applying the criteria, the search was narrowed to 50 articles. After reading the abstracts, 30 articles were selected for this article. The following criteria were used to select articles for this study:

1. Articles that discuss teaching presence or teaching immediacy and related the concept(s) to students' motivation.
2. Articles published within 2003 to 2014. Nevertheless, older publications are included for concept building and to support or refute arguments presented in this paper.
3. Empirical studies that identified teaching presence and teaching immediacy as online instructional strategies.
4. Published in peer-reviewed journals

In this article *teaching presence, instructor presence* and *teaching immediacy/ teachers' immediacy* are used to convey the same notion.

Data Management

The authors relied on Garrard's review matrix to conduct an extensive review of the relevant literature. The column headers include 'authors and year ' purpose, 'participants', 'research methodology', and 'major findings'. The major findings section includes information about related theories and notes, positive points and gaps identified. Quotes from the articles were used whenever possible to avoid distortion of information. The tables help organize information from various relevant research articles highlighting purposes and significance of the selected articles. The initial search resulted 1650 articles. After going through the abstract and applying the stated criteria to the abstract, a total of 25 articles were included in this literature review. A sample of the literature matrix is presented in Appendix A.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Instructor's Presence

In face-to-face classes instructors can interact with students and receive verbal and nonverbal cues to understand learners' level of engagement. In online classes learners often look for a similar type of 'virtual visibility' from their instructors or facilitators (Cull, 2010).

Timely feedback enhances the student/Instructor relationship and contributes to a healthy classroom dynamic. The online student has an expectation of immediate feedback for any and all concerns. They may feel isolated; therefore the Instructor has to manage the online environment differently than a face-to-face classroom (Silverstone & Keeler, 2013, p. 19).

Anderson (2008) identified ways to denote teaching presence in online class environments. Paying attention to "creating or repurposing" (p. 347) contents like lecture notes, adding teachers' comments, posting video lectures, including personalized inputs etc. can ensure a personal touch from the teacher and enables students to actually relate to the teacher or the instructor. Anderson also tied this practice to student motivation:

This design category of teaching presence also includes the processes through which the instructor negotiates timelines for group activities and student project work, a critical coordinating and motivating function of formal online course design and development, and a primary means of setting and maintaining teaching presence (p. 348).

Garrison (2007) posed that teaching presence played a significant role in creating an online learning community. The author noted, "teaching presence must consider the dual

role of both moderating and shaping the direction of the discourse. Both are essential for a successful community of inquiry" (p. 32). Garrison cautioned that instructors need to understand when they need to facilitate or direct online discussions, as they both are essential to use effectively in order to create a learning-focused online community. Various authors including Baker (2010), Garrison and Arbaugh, (2007), and Juwah (2006) viewed teacher's function as managerial, social, organizational or technical depending on the role they are playing in their classroom.

The relation between teaching presence and students' perceived learning is established in literature (Chesney & Marcangelo, 2010; Lori, 2013; Shea, Pickett & Pelz, 2004). Wu and Hiltz (2004) conducted a study where students asserted that interactions with the instructor help them engage in learning-oriented online discussions. Garrison (2005) stated that teaching presence is crucial to enhance critical thinking in students. The leadership role of instructors is often crucial in deciding cognitive content quality in the class activities. As Garrison noted "...we find the leadership role of the instructor to be powerful in triggering discussion and facilitating high levels of thinking and knowledge construction" (p. 137).

Instructor's Immediacy

Anderson (1979, cited in 2008) first recognized that immediacy of a teacher affects students' affective learning and therefore, students' achievement. Anderson, however, did not find any relation between instructor's immediacy and cognitive learning. Recent research highlighted a positive relationship between students' cognitive learning and teachers' presence (Baker, 2010; Witt, Whelees & Allen, 2004).

Vonderwell (2003) pointed out that pattern of feedback given to the learners during one academic semester: in the beginning of the semester, usually it is very regular. Then as the semester progress, the amount of feedback and their timeliness decreases. Timely and constructive feedback can play significant role in ensuring learners' engagement.

Baker (2010) advocated for the relationship between instructor's immediacy and learner's cognitive and affective learning. It was established that verbally explicit immediate feedback influenced learners' self-perceived cognitive and affective learning and therefore, increased engagement in online class environment. The trend of offering online classes compels us to explore strategies to engage learners in online class environment. The literature review focuses on the following variables: instructor's presence and instructor's immediacy in increasing learners' cognition, motivation and affective learning.

Student engagement in online learning has been described as an expanding industry' (Becker & Posner, 2012; Kim & Hoop, 2013; Rowe & Asbell-Clarke, 2007). The flexibility available in online classes is one of the reasons for its increasing popularity in both educational and professional settings. Online interactions are recognized and welcomed in literature. Garrison et al. (2005) emphasized the importance of interactions in educational setting. These interactions can be enhanced through the use of innovative and appropriate technology.

Interaction is seen as central to an educational experience and is a primary focus in the study of online learning. The focus on interaction in online learning emerges from the potential and properties of new technologies to support sustained educational communication (p. 134).

It is the responsibility of the online class provider to offer interesting and engaging learning environments where the learners not only learn the content, but also have a positive and safe experience. "The proliferation of offerings and options in online education programs exacerbates the need for research into the nature and effectiveness of teaching and learning in such environments" (Kim & Hoop, 2013, p. 79). The online interaction is describes as sine qua non in online class environment, however, interactions alone cannot guarantee cognitive development and content learning quality in online class environment (Garrison, 2005).

Anderson (2008) proposed that instructors play a crucial role in facilitating online discussions to welcome new perspectives and critical thinking that are related to the actual content of the course. Researchers (e.g. Cheng, Paré, Collimore & Joordens, 2011; Hew and Cheung Levin 2011; Ioannou, Demetriou & Mama (2014) proposed guidelines to make online discussions engaging in order to create online environment suitable to cause positive learning endeavor for the learners. The guidelines are presented in Table 1:

Table 1 *Online Discussion Facilitation Guidelines*

Strategies	**Application**
The discussion goes on for at least a week	The learners will get time to reflect on the content shared in the posts
The syllabus shows ground rules to follow in discussions	Learners understand the expectations
Ask students related questions to stimulate discussions	The questions asked by the instructors will help students be engaged
The instructor adds positive comments to the students	Encourages learners to get engaged in the discussion

Strategies	Application
Encourage learners to relate their own experiences	The learners can learn from their experiences and also will also play attention to the discussions if they know that the experiences are used later.
Ask learners to post at least two responses to peers: Hence encourage contribution	Ensures peer learning and contributes to social learning
Ask learners to relate discussion posts with text, videos, lecture, slides and other resources provided	Encourages learners to utilize the course resources
Ask learners to summarize their discussion threads	Provides learners to reflect on their and others' comments

Kam and Hoop (2013) proposed that "learners can share data from their experiments, discuss the common pattern in their results, question discrepant data, challenge misconceptions, and form evidence-based conclusions" (p. 80). An online class should provide the learners the opportunity to discuss, question, criticize and challenge in order to achieve learners' cognition, motivation and affective learning.

McCroskey (2006) suggested that instructor's communication can have significant impact on learners' affective learning. Instructors can play role in directing class discussions in the right direction. Their positive and constructive feedback in timely manner can reduce learners' anxiety and concerns. If practiced effectively, the asynchronous class discussion can produce more affective learning as compared to that of synchronous discussions (Cleveland-Innes & Ally 2007). Moore and Kearsley (1996) proposed transactional theory where the authors emphasized the transactional distance between learners and instructors. Classes with only lectures and no communication contain large transactional distance. While, classes that indulge interactions are perceived to have low transactional distance.

Bloom (1956) asserted the importance of instructor's emotional responses to influence learning. The lower level (knowledge, comprehension and application) and higher level (analyze, synthesize and evaluate) of thinking are achieved through careful and planned facilitation. Burill (2011) advocated that providing meaning to learning is the effective way of practicing Bloom's Taxonomy in increasing students' motivation and learning. Baker (2010) and Russo and Benson, (2005) proposed positive relation between instructor's presence and affective learning of the students. Some studies (Baker, 2010; Ni, 2004) evidenced positive relationship between instructor's immediacy and learners' affective learning.

Miltiadou and Savenye (2003) proposed that motivation plays significant role in deciding whether s student will succeed in a class environment. Therefore, the instructors need to pay attention on students' motivation. Researchers Palloff & Pratt (2003) suggested that motivation plays a vital role in online class environment as it depends on learners' self-directed learning pace.

Role of Instructors in Online Class Environments

Caudle (2013) proposed that "teaching presence is more involved than designing and facilitating a community; it also includes caring for the affective domain and mediating interactions" (p. 119). Based on the information received from the available literature, the following unique roles of instructors are highlighted:

Course Facilitator. According to Silverstone and Keeler (2013), clear instructions in facilitation increase learner and instructor interactions. Instructor's presence and immediacy in providing feedback are also capable of creating learner and instructor interactions. In a study conducted by Silverstone and Keeler (2013) the concept of "Emergency help line" was introduced. The students were given an email address that was solely created to address students' concerns.

Subject Matter Expert. Silverstone and Keeler (2013) proposed that in online classes instructors can attempt to encourage creating information repository and sharing information: "when managed effectively, discussion forums can encourage learners to share information, build on the ideas of others, and construct understanding about the changing world of technology" (Silverstone & Keeler, 2013, p. 18). Being at ease with the technology being used help increase interactions with the actual content for the learners. According to Cottrell and Donaldson (2013) accessibility to resources increases the interactions between learners and content.

Manager. Students learn in different ways and therefore, online class environments should consist of various measures like, lectures, videos, handouts, graphics, and activities to satisfy learners with different learning style (Silverstone and Keeler, 2013). Kim and Hoop (2013) advocated the importance of social interactions and learning by thinking and doing. Learners' previous experiences can facilitate their learning.

Course Designer. Nagel and Kotzé (2010) coined the importance of using technology effectively to achieve learners' engagement in online class environment. Nevertheless, technology should not become the sole focus of the class. In the context of nurse education, Cottrell and Donaldson (2013) advocated that technology in many cases, acts as a medium to deliver content to the learners. It does not aid in the content itself. "The concept of

teaching and learning is driven by the pedagogical principles of teaching and learning rather than technology itself, which captures the principles of effective e-learning" (Cottrell and Donaldson, 2013, p. 221). Hence, learners should be provided with clear instructions and navigation guides to get them acquainted with the learning management system that is used to deliver the course.

Offir, Barth and Shteinbok, (2003) included the following roles for instructors: social (positive environment through interactions), procedural (addressing administrative and technical issues related to the lesson or course), expository (providing resources), explanatory (answering questions), cognitive task engagement (enabling learners to process content), and learning assistance interactions (ensuring retention) (p. 71). In their attempt to measure presence in online environments, Witmer, and Singer (1998) included two set of factors: Control factors (indicating authority) and sensory factors (indicating support). The control factors include degrees of control, anticipation of events, mode of control, physical environment modifiability and last but not least, immediacy of control (p. 229). Data in Table 2 reveals the various roles instructors are expected to play in online class environments as demonstrated in various research studies. The table also presents the specific responsibilities associated with the roles.

Table 2 *Role of Instructors in Online Class Environments*

Role Of Instructor In Relation To Teaching Presence And Teaching Immediacy	**Responsibilities**
Mentor	• Understanding learners' personal learning goals • Helping them achieve their goals
Facilitator	• Encouraging learners to be involved in the class and owning learning content • Encouraging learners to be involved
Designer and Developer	• Designing courses to meet the learning styles of learners (visual, auditory and kinesthetic) • Organizing course content and information in a user-friendly way
Manager or supervisor	• Resolving conflicts among learners • Ensuring a safe environment for the learners to share their experiences and

	views
Technical Assistant	• Answering technical questions regarding class sites • Troubleshooting technical hitches to ensure smooth access to learners
Model or Ideal figure	• Modeling ideal online class etiquette • Presenting ideal class behavior by creating examples
Devil's Advocate	• Questioning to spark critical thinking • Ensuring learning reflection through assignments and class activities
Counselor	• Helping learners overcome any learning related difficulty (i.e. isolation) • Discussing with learners to understand learning outcomes
Explorer	• Trying new ideas and tools in online classes in terms of assignments and activities • Using innovative techniques to ensure learners engagement (keeping track of recent research and findings)
Moderator	• Acting as the negotiator in group conflicts • Acting as a representative of learning; perspectives present outside the class environment
Researcher	• Performing searches to get acquainted with the new development in online class research areas • Adding new aspects to online classes for effective delivery of content
Administrator	• Indicating class rules and expectations • Ensuring learners follow class etiquette
Repository	• Acting as resources to learners in answering their queries • Providing learners with links and instructions regarding available resources

Implications to Human Resource Development (HRD) Research and Practice

This literature review contributes toward proposing strategies for online class environments, where the instructors and learners are capable of gaining positive learning experiences. Strategies can be beneficial in both educational and professional settings. Strategies are also helpful in designing and delivering effective online trainings in companies. "E-learning is considered an effective means to reduce training expenses and improve service quality of organizations" (Ho & Kuo, p. 24).

The field of human resource development provides training and development as one of the core components to ensure development at both individual and organizational levels (Werner & DeSimone, 2011). The findings of this study act towards strengthening the relationship between instructors and learners to ensure optimal learning experiences in virtual classrooms.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Existing research on the role of teaching presence and teaching immediacy in online learners' motivation and learning was explored in this study. To achieve the purpose of this study, relevant articles were extracted and reviewed using the Literature Review Matrix developed by Garrard (2007). Anderson et al. (2001) argued that teaching presence can be achieved through designated "student" facilitators (i.e. it can be evenly distributed among students, who can play a facilitator's role in leading specific discussions or assignments). Anderson (2008) further argued that online discussions and discourse provides learners with the opportunity to engage in critical reflection and set up a platform where students can freely express their views--even when they disagree with the instructors. Prensky (2000) preferred to call the process as power of reasoning. As Anderson (2008) correctly noted when talking about involving students in discourse:

In fulfilling this component of teaching presence, the teacher regularly reads and responds to student contributions and concerns, and constantly searches for ways to support understanding in the individual student, and the development of the learning community as a whole. (p. 351).

This study has limitations. Each limitation, however, opens opportunities for future research areas. The study examined previous studies and proposed connections between teaching presence and students' learning, and teaching immediacy and learners' motivation and cognition. Quantitative and qualitative studies are needed to confirm the findings in this paper. Important demographic variables such as age, gender, ethnic background and

socioeconomic status were not explored in this study, therefore providing an opportunity to expand the research in this area.

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Appendix A

Literature Review Matrix

No.	Lead Author	Year	Purpose	Participants	Methodology	Findings
1	Arbaugh	2014	The purpose of this study is to examine whether course technologies, learner behaviors or instructor behaviors (teaching presence) best predict online course outcomes so that administrators and support personnel can prioritize their efforts and investments.	634 students and 18 instructors	Quantitative: survey questionnaire	Teaching presence and perceived learning shows strongest relationship
2	Boston	2014	Explores "the relationship between indicators of the Community of Inquiry Framework and student persistence".	28877 students at American Public University System (APUS)	Quantitative: Linear regression was utilized to analyze the relationship between a linear combination of the independent variables	Social presence and teaching presence are important predictors for students re enrollment (retention)
3	Campbell	2014	"The goal was to identify the effects of a set of specific teacher activities on objectively determined learning	132 students enrolled in an online critical thinking class	Quantitative	High presence was not associated with activity in class discussion, homework performance,

No.	Lead Author	Year	Purpose	Participants	Methodology	Findings
			outcomes" (p. 41)			or tests over the assigned readings
4	Ekwunife-Orakwue	2014	The purpose of this study is to measure how student interactions in online and blended learning environments impacted 5student learning outcomes, as measured by student satisfaction and student grades.	342 students enrolled in online classes in	Quantitative: student satisfaction survey instrument	"Students may interact with course contents more frequently than they interact with their instructors and other learners. This raises the question of the role instructors should play in promoting greater dialogue with students, and among students, especially to reduce feelings of isolation and detachment that may contribute to perceived distance".
5	Caudle	2013	The study describes how the author "established teaching and social presences within a 3-month community of practice comprising four educators and mentor teachers".	Qualitative: Narrative Approach	Teachers (4) mentoring pre-service teachers enrolled in the university's early childhood teacher education program	"This study provides insight into the many roles a facilitator adopted to establish teaching and social presences within a community of practice".
6	Gregory	2012	"The purpose of this article is to show some evidence of the	4 participants for qualitative observation; quantitative data	mixed method approach: Observation and statistical	"A teacher who is planning online

No.	Lead Author	Year	Purpose	Participants	Methodology	Findings
			mutual influence of the students' technological behaviors and the students' cognitive factors in online learning environments – including teacher and instructional design factors".	was analyzed using 88 participants, 2130 electronic communications and 268 learning products.	analysis	individual work should bear in mind that, in this type of activity, students show a tendency to approach the teacher personally to ask for explanations, express doubts or make comments in relation to the course content". "a teacher planning online collaborative group work needs to consider the composition of the group as it is likely that the students will only interact with members of their own group and not with the rest of the class and they will interact, to a lesser extent, with the teacher" Hence, learner and teacher interaction depends on planned students'

No.	Lead Author	Year	Purpose	Participants	Methodology	Findings
						assignments.
	Shea	2006	"The goals of this research were to enhance understanding of online pedagogical processes in the service of improving the quality of instruction and learning in a large asynchronous learning environment—thus in many ways this mode of inquiry may be seen as action research".	1067 participants from 32 colleges	Quantitative survey method	"There is a clear connection between perceived teaching presence and students' sense of learning community".
7	Kupczynski	2010	The purpose of the study is to "to explore student perceptions of the impact of the indicators of Teaching Presence on their success in online courses".	643 students (362 students enrolled in a variety of classes related to certificate or AA programs at South Texas College; The second group of students consisted of 281 students enrolled in courses at West Virginia University's College of Human Resources and Education).	Mixed Method that is Descriptive statistics, odds ratios and open ended questions	"feedback indicator as being most important to course success; regardless of learner level, the need for presentation of clear, concise objectives, instructions and general participation guidelines should be a cornerstone of online course development"