

THE USE OF PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD PRACTICE IN UNDERGRADUATE
DISTANCE EDUCATION

By

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(ABSTRACT)

There is literature available on the characteristics of good teachers and there is also literature that shows teaching differences by gender and by level of experience. Additionally, there are models of instruction that relate to distance education, as well as a model of good practice in undergraduate education. There is, however, a lack of research on whether those who teach distance education classes use these principles of good practice. There is also a lack of research on whether there are differences in the degree to which they use these practices by gender or by level of teaching experience. This study attempted to address the gap in the existing literature by examining whether distance educators use the principles of good teaching practice. Additionally, this study attempted to examine whether there are differences of use by teaching experience and by gender of instructor.

For purposes of this study, one instructional design model was used (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). A 52-item survey, the Online Teaching Practices (OTP) Inventory, was developed specifically for this study. The OTP consisted of seven sections that measured the extent to which instructors implemented the seven principles in the design of their course curricula. The response options asked participants to numerically rate how well each item described their online class.

Mean scores were used to assess the degree to which the principles were being used in general. Then ANOVAs were run to determine if differences existed between/among groups. Finally, in cases where there were three or more groups,

independent t-tests were used to determine where those differences lay. Results revealed that instructors are implementing the seven principles into course curricula design.

Additionally, a significant difference was found between males and females on one scale.

Three significant differences were found based on level of teaching experience and three more differences by discipline were identified.

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