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# Solitary Learners and Solitary Instructors

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# ***SOLITARY LEARNERS AND SOLITARY INSTRUCTORS***

**Michael Simonson**

*Co-Editor*

Fengfeng Ke and Alison Carr-Chellman (2007) recently reported on an interesting study dealing with solitary learners and their experiences in online, collaborative settings. They stated that there have been few formal studies that target what happens to solitary learners, especially in online courses where collaborative strategies are used. Solitary learners were those who did not readily participate in online instructional and social interactions.

While the body of literature related to solitary learners may be small, there is a growing interest in this type of student. But what about solitary instructors—instructors who might be defined as professionals who do not work in a traditional school, college, or training organization? They work alone, probably at home, without regular or consistent contact with other instructors, teachers, or trainers. The solitary instructor may be an adjunct for a school or college, or a consultant working from a home office.

The defining characteristic of the solitary instructor is the lack of direct, personal, face-to-face interaction with other teachers of similar or related backgrounds. The definition of the solitary instructor would be a teacher, trainer, or professor who works alone, outside of a traditional instructional institution, with little or no regular personal contact with other professionals who have similar backgrounds.

Certainly, the phenomenon of the solitary teacher is real; more instruction is being offered at a distance with a separation of teacher, students, and resources (Schlosser & Simonson, 2006). Most often, researchers have concentrated on the impact on students of learning at a distance. A few researchers have looked at the changing role of the teacher and trainer, but the solitary instructor, as defined above, is an area of research in need of much more investigation.

When working alone, often at a considerable distance from the traditional support services of the teacher, such as a comprehensive professional library, media production centers, technology support staff, and collaborators, how do solitary instructors cope, how do they solve problems, what tools do they use, and how do they stay current? The editors of the *Quarterly Review* would certainly like to publish quality studies that investigate the growing phenomenon of the solitary instructor.

## ***REFERENCES***

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