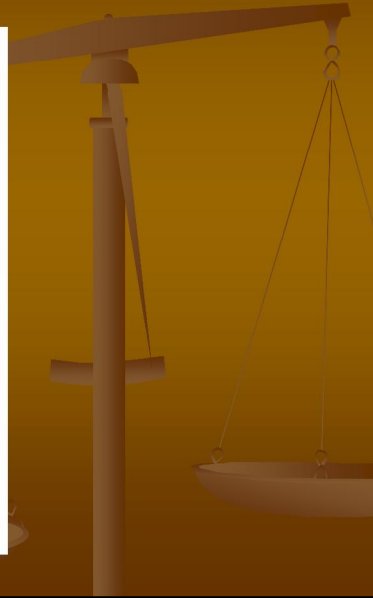


The Perfect Blend Blended Learning



Blended education is the middle ground between traditional classroom teaching and online education. As described by various thinkers, Blended learning is a combination of face-to-face learning and online or other forms of distance learning within the same course. It allows for interface between campus and distance students and has some very real advantages over tradition on-campus only or, for that matter, online only. An annotated Bibliography follows these few short slides which demonstrate current theoretical and practical work being done in this field. It gives credibility to an approach which enriches on-campus education as well as giving connectivity and community to the distance students.

Within World Mission Education, we posit that the face-to-face aspects of Blended Learning could take place in three possible scenarios, namely:

1. Traditional Classroom; or
2. Extension Centres where students gather for common sessions with a teacher; or
3. Interactive video conference between multiple “classroom” sites.

Any one of these possibilities provide for the social presence, the cognitive presence and the teacher presence so valuable to a teaching/learning environment. These elements are especially important for some students with particular learning styles, and are also valuable to others as they learn to value the community in learning as they do in worship, another individual and community combination.

Options

- Classroom Instruction and Virtual Classroom
- Interactive Web-based Training 66.9%
- Threaded Discussion
- List Serve
- Learning Management Software Such as Moodle or BlackBoard
- Instant Message
- A-synchronous DVD/WEBCAST/PODCAST
- Online workbooks

Possibilities of what may be appropriate as part of any mix

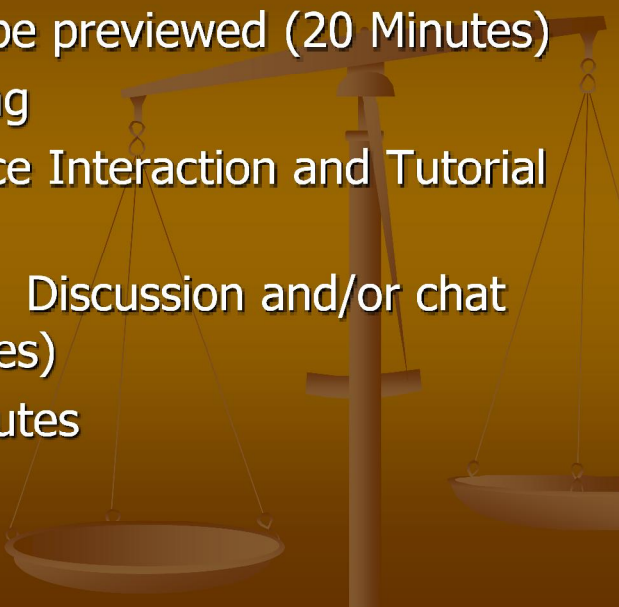
As has been indicated by some practitioners, Higher Education has always been blended between interactive classroom and individual pursuits, between synchronous and asynchronous. For instance, in the most traditional of university or seminary classes there have been classroom sessions (synchronous and interactive) which also required individual reading and research (asynchronous and individual). Thus the newer approaches of including online presentations or

How does one choose which elements to include: This, along with any other curriculum design question, brings us back to the purpose of the course: What elements are particularly fitted to the objectives to be achieved in the learning plan itself?

In this blend we desire some non-negotiable elements (the recipe will not make it without them). They include:

1. 2 way Face-to-face interaction either in modules, video link or traditional classroom setting. The literature attached demonstrates that live teleconferencing is ever so much more effective than teleconferencing for psychosocial presence, for clear communication including body language and facial communication, and for a sense of being together.
2. Reflection time and contemplation of the materials and outcomes to be achieved. This can so well through that blend which includes a-synchronous activity as well as synchronous. Again, remember that differing learning styles will gravitate more to either the first or second of these ingredients, but both are needed for balance and long-term outcomes.

Hypothetical Blend

- Power Point to be previewed (20 Minutes)
 - Textbook reading
 - Video Conference Interaction and Tutorial (90 minutes)
 - Daily Threaded Discussion and/or chat room (40 minutes)
 - TOTAL 150 minutes
- 

1. The list on the slide on the preceding page are the most frequent inclusions in a blended learning program according to a survey of training organizations who use blended learning approaches. Choosing from these and others, a possible blend is suggested above which would give a complete experience for students.
2. The experts suggest that, without the learning management software system, blended learning can become very confusing and may not lead to an integrated “whole” of all the parts blending together.

The use dictates the Blend

- Robyn Smyth from the University of New England (Armidale, NSW Australia) indicates some of the usages of blended learning for modalities such as one-to-one, one-to-some etc. Her article which is reviewed in the annotated bibliography indicates the meanings for these terms, but the table which follows gives a view of possibilities of the blend. The table follows:

Table 1: Current and potential examples of practice

Instructive pedagogy moving towards constructive pedagogy	Fit of videoconferencing media to purpose described by example:			
	Type of interaction	Increasing interactivity and learner-centeredness		
	One to many: Lecturer/student to many in single or multi point link	Guest lecture or timetabled class Asynchronous streaming or podcasting Students' assessable presentations Practical demonstration without interaction	Formal tutorial or class Practical demonstration or practice presentation with asynchronous interaction Audioconferencing of tutorials	Practical demonstration with synchronous interaction, questioning and feedback Study skills tutorial
	One to one: lecturer/student to student in single point link	Remote practicum observation Oral/practical examinations Academic skills consultation	Post-graduate supervision Master classes	Student to student mentoring, teamwork or collaboration Peer learning
	One to some: Lecturer/student to several students in single or multi-point links	Tutorial discussions - audioconferencing or videoconferencing Dissertation viva Assessment tasks Group presentations	Student group leader working with others on joint project Facilitated discussion Practical experiments	Students developing presentation skills with self initiated practice for feedback Teamwork
	Some to some: Students to other students in a multi point link	Project team meetings Mandatory group work Post graduate supervision including cross institutional collaboration	Teamwork Self guided real/virtual practical/field work Role plays Project collaborations Discussions	Student initiated self help groups, action learning circles Rehearsals Real-time action or problem-based learning
Diagonal arrow indicates increasing student autonomy and control of learning. Shaded cells indicate current practice at UNE				
Developed from: Smyth, R. (2005)				

FINAL WORD

- Why settle for the strengths of traditional only and miss out on the advantages of distance education
- Why settle for the strengths of distance education only and deny your students of the advantages of traditional educational approaches.
- You do not need to do either – Create the perfect blend for both on-campus and distance students in your settings.

Our final word – the slide above says it all! It is not an either/or situation, nor is it a case of better/worse. It is a case of learning from both approaches, seeing why each is valued and what each achieves better than the other – and then bringing them together in blended learning.

An annotated bibliography follows which gives insight into the movement of blended learning. The literature and the usages of blended learning are so plentiful that an exhaustive treatment would be impossible, but the attachment indicates general trends in the literature which I have reviewed.

The hope is for the very best learning which sets patterns for life-long learning, is accessible but also is enriched by incorporating students into a learning community which, in many ways, reflects the worshipping community in dynamics and human response. Both depend on individual and community activity – and seem to work best when individual learning (or worship) and group learning (or worship) are a part of the total mix that leads to the developed person whom we need in leadership and in life.

RLW