"*There are no poster children for failures in e-learning. In contrast to success stories of early adaptors and innovators, no publication story showed pictures or told stories of the other – often more common – side of the story: the hundreds of e-learning course titles that went unused, the internal battles between IT and training, and the purchases of expensive learning management software that went un- or under-utilised*." Carliner & Shank (2008)

In our debate we divide our opening statement into three pillars to support the stance that moving to an online, or blended environment, is not a simple task even for seasoned "*good*" educators. The first pillar addresses the personal issues evidenced in the transition; the second pillar focuses on the pedagogical aspects that differentiate face to face (F2F) and online learning and, finally, the third pillar describes the technological issues associated with a move from a physical teaching space to a virtual one.

Personal Pillar.

1. Roles

The role of an online facilitator has different characteristics and challenges than what is found in a F2F environment. As online facilitator, one monitors as well as contributes to dialogue, poses and responds to questions. Paulson (2000) defines an e-learning moderator as a lecturer, a tutor, a facilitator, a mentor, assistant, a provocateur, an observer & a participant. All these different roles create a number of tensions that don't exist in the traditional teaching role. These tensions need to be overcome.

2. Time

Online course delivery and design requires more time (40 to 50% greater workload according to some research) if we want to achieve a quality teaching and learning environment. Student activities have to be thoroughly designed ahead of delivery, all the material has to be ready and accessible. Time is required for consistent, frequent and focused engagement with the students. In particular, to be effective and motivational e-moderators must be prepared to respond quickly to learners' needs, by checking correspondence regularly and allocating sufficient time to coaching individuals and communities, usually requiring out of hours feedback. This time flexibility is not easy to timetable in academia. F2F classroom teachers do not require this flexibility.

3. Skills

The skills for online effectiveness fall into two broad categories: the design skills needed for authoring a course and the teaching skills necessary for delivering the course online (Kuprevich). Designing student activity is more important online than delivery of content which is more important in f2f. The core characteristics of a good online tutor were identified by Cox (2000). These include the following:

> *On line personality*: E-moderators need to be able to empathise with learners and appear open and honest. This is more difficult in an online environment.
>
> *Motivational*: E-moderators must be able to motivate learners to participate in communities. This is more difficult when some students respond better to a F2F form of communication.

Organisational Skills: The e-moderator needs to be able to manage progression of contributions towards the closing of discussions, organizing discussions and on-line conferencing, monitoring of communities and discussions, and engaging in communication with communities and individuals. F2f classroom teachers do not require these skills.

Technological Expertise: E-moderators must be confident and competent at using a community's virtual learning environment and be familiar with the software tools available and their application to the environment. They should also be adaptive and innovative in their use of technological expertise and be able to develop new moderating strategies. F2f classroom teachers do not of necessity require these skills.

Subject Knowledge: E-moderators should not only be knowledgeable and have expertise in the area of the community topic but they are also required to be familiar with the resources of the community which may have been produced by others. F2f classroom teachers do not of necessity require these skills.

Learn new behavioural cues: The F2F skills of reading body language, establishing rapport & working with groups will differ, but they need to work equally well online. McConnell (2000) classifies several differences in teaching & learning between online and F2F work.

4. Communication

E-moderators need to have effective communication skills in an online environment where the written word is lacking visual expression and it can often be misinterpreted against its intended meaning. Online text communication or asynchronous learning has to be coherent as the absence of verbal speech eliminates the option to continuously adapt one's message. F2F classroom teachers are not constrained by this.

"*Tone of voice, facial expressions, body language are dramatically diminished in the online context… that presents communication challenges*." McArthur (2011). The lack of tone of voice and body language that is present in a F2F environment requires a higher frequency of feedback. Indeed, for feedback to be effective, detailed and positive, it must be given more frequently by an online tutor, than with a F2F classroom teacher in the classroom.

More so than the traditional teacher, the eTutor has to maintain interaction. S/he must encourage and facilitate more social and educational interactions (monitoring/nurturing/summarizing activities) than in a F2F environment and ensure that participation is appropriate and balanced.

5. Pressure

There is a constant pressure to keep content accessible, up-to-date, relevant and mobile for the elearning teacher. Tensions in this new role need to be overcome. Facilitation has different characteristics and challenges to the f2f environment. The online facilitator has to monitors as well as contributes to dialogue, poses and responds to questions. These require new skills and often there is a lack of willingness to change and adapt new technology with faculty colleagues.

6. Concerns

E-teachers can have personal concerns with software training which requires regular practice

and re-training. E-teachers require more structure in their classes to meet the needs of the learner. Novel e-teachers can also experience anxiety with new technologies and, if not supported suitably by faculty, lack of confidence in ones teaching can ensue.

7. Recognition

Currently, there is a lack of recognition by faculty management around the whole area of blended and fully online courses. The initial workload required to develop elearning modules, the constant monitoring and moderating of tasks and discussion fora, the additional training required; these are often not considered in staff timetabling allowances.

Pedagogy

Our position is that the pedagogical requirements of an online education environment are considerably different to that of a traditional classroom and, therefore, require teachers to develop and implement new pedagogical approaches which make transferring to the online environment a considerable undertaking. Gerrard (2002) points out that the differences between traditional and online classrooms mean that teaching for the online classroom will require "*substantial pedagogical shifts*". She contends that it cannot be assumed that a good classroom teacher will necessarily be a good online teacher. Gerrard also cites Salmon (2000):

"*Online teaching and learning changes the scope and the competencies we require of academics and lecturers. It changes what we actually do with students*."

The pedagogical implications span a number of categories:

1. Choose technology wisely, based on sound pedagogical rationale.

Technology is both an enabler and a constraint. The major advantages of e-Learning are its accessibility and flexibility but technology (such as VLEs, interoperability issues, firewalls etc) can potentially restrict what the teacher/lecturer would like to do. Furthermore, detailed foundational knowledge of learner characteristics (eg technical ability) and an understanding of effective online teaching techniques are essential prerequisites for the eTutor.

Pedagogy must come before technology and a solid learning design (that hinges on an understanding of the online learning process and how to facilitate it) is central in an online context. Unlike the f2f environment, designing student activity is more important online than delivery of content which is more important in f2f. This design expertise has to be acquired if common pitfalls such as overloading of content and activity repetition are to be avoided (Ascough, 2002).

According to Moore and Kearsley (cited by Gerrard, 2002), distance education requires what they describe as "*special techniques of course design, special instructional techniques, special methods of communication...*". McConnell (2000) also classifies several differences in teaching & learning between online and F2F work. These differences place the teacher in a role that in many ways is more aligned to that of a small group tutor than that of a traditional lecturer, and as such require an approach to learning that a traditional teacher may be neither skilled nor comfortable with.

The online environment emphasises the importance of active learning. Considerable attention

must be given to both the learning process and the learning outcomes. It requires teachers to design their delivery and the collaborative activities that take place in ways that are specifically targeted to support learners constructing their own meaning. With the learning experience evolving as the collaborative and constructivist activities take place, teachers also have to be able to adapt their approach and continually help guide the student toward the most effective learning result.

2. Blend, but get the blend right (with experience).

According to Rosenberg (2003), "The question is not if we should blend….rather the question is what are the ingredients." A review of the literature indicates that there are many models and frameworks available to assist in creating 'a good blend'. Graham (2006) notes that there are:

> *Enabling blends*: which address issues of of access and convenience using technologies in a way that mimics face-to-face modality.
> *Enhancing blends*: which allow incremental changes to the pedagogy without radically changing the way teaching and learning occur.
> *Transforming blends*: which allow a radical transformation of the pedagogy thus enabling intellectual activity that was not practically possible without the technology.

However, there is growing agreement in the literature that it is not a single approach to designing a blended course that will meet all learner needs. Therefore the ability of the tutor to deploy technologies that are most effective to their particular situation is critical.

3. Implement online-oriented models and techniques

The 5-Step model developed by Gilly Salmon (2000) is widely known as an approach that fosters important pedagogical aspirations such as maintaining interaction, promoting critical thinking and encouraging peer-based learning. At each stage of the model (1. Access & Motivation, 2. Online Socialisation, 3. Information exchange, 4. Knowledge construction & 5. Development), specific tutor activities are advised to ensure overall pedagogical integrity. This is a model specifically devised for learning in the online environment, therefore validating the position that an online environment requires a substantial change in the pedagogical approach.

Using Salmon's (or a similar) model in practice, however, some issues may arise. For example; the tutor may need to provide technical support and work to maintain learners' motivation through what can be a very frustrating orientation period. Furthermore, different learners may be at different stages in this development process. As in face-to-face situations the tutor must manage and support students in the same group who may be at different stages in the Five Step Model. The underlying philosophy and programme designed by the eTutor will have a bearing on how successful the model is.

4. Develop appropriate assessment practices

Assessment in an online environment requires a different approach to assessment in a face-to-face classroom environment. Beebe et al., (2000) highlight the differences: they contend that online instructors need to rethink the assessment models traditionally used in face-to-face learning and provide multiple methods of both formative and summative assessment to

maintain online student performance. Peer-assessment and self-assessment aspects must be included. eTutors also need to become proficient with grading criteria for online assessment and tools such as online assessment rubrics.

Technology

1. Selection

There is little doubt that there are a huge range of programmes available for developing elearning courses and the digital landscape is always changing. Questions abound here: Which package(s) should the eTeacher choose? Should the eTeacher choose freeware or buy? When purchasing software how will the eTeacher know if it will be useful and for how long? This decision making process may be further complicated by faculty budgetary issues.

How can the eTeacher make an informed decision without some knowledge? Should the eTeacher try multiple packages to see which suits us best? This may be relatively straight forward when choosing between a small number of packages for one task but what about the fact that the eTeacher may use multiple packages for different aspects of the course: wiki's, webinars, slideshows, quizzes, discussions, etc. There is also the issue of hardware and becoming competent with the use of said, e.g. headsets. Will mobile technology be integrated into the VLE?

2. Competence

Once the eTeacher has chosen their packages they then need to learn how to use them. Northedge (2003) refers to, "*… the F2F tutor's role … as subject expert*". Does this help with developing the resource? Certainly - if your subject is computer based in some way. What if your subject is not technical in any great way? What if you don't have very good technical support in your institution? What if you are not technically inclined? Indeed the literature (Cox et al, 2000) states that the e moderator needs to be technologically competent:

"*In order to be an effective e-moderator, e-moderators must be confident and competent at using a community's virtual learning environment. E-moderators should be familiar with the software tools available and their application to the environment. They should also be adaptive and innovative in their use of technological expertise and be able to develop new moderating strategies*"

Kulp (1999) states simply that technical skills are a pre-requisite to eTutoring. A good F2F lecture does not necessarily have these skills. They will have to be learned and the lecturer will have to become comfortable using them. This represents an undertaking while by no means in surmountable and hardly straight forward.

3. Resource Development

The eTeacher has jumped the hurdles of selecting and becoming competent with the digital tools for use on the course. Can the eTeacher now take a breather? Not yet, the eTeacher now has to develop the course work. Perhaps this will be straightforward?

A difference between online courses and F2F is that the online course has to be delivered in a very different way. Online tutor time is mostly front-loaded as the content must be complete before the course is delivered. Then the role is that of moderator, facilitator, and motivator. This is a completely different structure to the traditional "sage on the stage" F2F model. One may be good at both but there is no guarantee and can we say it's a straightforward change?

4. Technical support

The eTeacher has used their technical skills to choose, become competent and develop our course, surely now the online course will run itself and the the eTeacher can relax? During E moderating the eTeacher is expected to support students through a gradual process from access and motivation through to socialisation and knowledge construction and development (Salmon, 2000). The eTeacher is expected to give technical support throughout these stages. Thus the eTeacher technical ability will probably need to exceed simple competency. It may be felt that technical support could be provided by technical staff but this is not necessarily the case, certainly in smaller campuses.

Conclusion

With a traditional didactic F2F teaching, the teacher may be considered to have subject knowledge, teaching and learning awareness. These skills need to be augmented to become an eTeacher. To be an effective online tutor one has to select what tools to use, gain competency in their use, prepare all the course work with them prior to running the course, provide technical support to the students as they become conversant with the different tasks they are required to perform; and all this with little or no additional support or recognition from colleagues. The Sloan Consortium provides guidance on good practice for online teaching effectiveness. It outlines and provides links to the many programmes in place at higher education institutes to educate and prepare faculty to deliver online. This resource and its many links to resources and programmes at a wide range of institutions is testament to a widespread recognition that faculty require education and skills development in order to teach online.

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