

Colvin Clarke, R. & Kwinn, A. (2007). Meet the New Virtual Classroom in *The New Virtual Classroom Evidence Based Guidelines for Synchronous e-Learning*. (p.3-23) San Francisco CA: Pfeiffer

In this chapter Colvin-Clarke and Kwinn describe the features that may be found in the new virtual classroom. They continue by illustrating how the virtual classroom is similar to both face to face and asynchronous e-learning and suggest that we should not ignore the lessons learnt from teaching using both of these environments when using the virtual classroom. The authors provide a list of reasons both pragmatic and instructional for when the virtual classroom should be used for training and argue that time and cost savings amount to nothing if the virtual classroom fails to support learning. Clarke and Kwinn recognise that organisations are moving more towards a blended solution for training delivery harnessing the affordances of each delivery method. The chapter closes with an expert's forum where experts from corporate training provide insight into the growing role of the virtual classroom, how to position it within an organisation and key lessons learnt when adopting a virtual classroom approach.

Although this book was written in 2007 the features outlined by Colvin and Kwinn are similar to those available today when using virtual classroom technology. Their comparison of virtual classroom technology to face to face training and asynchronous e-learning reminds us that the technology has more in common with these instructional methods than may be first thought and we should not ignore any lessons learnt from teaching using these environments when moving to teaching online. Their suggested list of when to use the technology provides the reader with guidelines to consider when deciding on a virtual classroom session, and their suggestion to support training delivered through print media with online Q and A sessions reminds the reader that where it is necessary to deliver training through particular methods the technology can be used to support rather than deliver. Clarke and Kwinn suggest that they are limited in their experience with the technology and use practical examples from training experts throughout the chapter to illustrate their point. The inclusion of the expert's forum at the end of the chapter provides the reader with practical advice on the challenges that may be encountered when adopting this innovative technology.

Reflecting on this chapter I realise that rather than looking on this technology as a move to a different delivery mode I need to bring my experiences from face to face training and

asynchronous e-learning to this new environment. This means addressing cognitive load and ensuring interaction. One of the aspects I found most interesting in the chapter is the authors' comment that everyone they spoke to mentioned the need for interactivity in the virtual classroom but no one spoke about the need for effective visuals. Bearing in mind a significant part of the screen in the virtual classroom is taken up by the power point presentation this is something I had not considered and I hope to incorporate this element when creating content for our virtual classroom. The expert's forum at the end of the chapter also provides some insight into the challenges experienced when introducing the technology in a corporate environment. From my perspective it can be difficult to locate research on the implementation of this technology in a corporate setting so although the forum is not long enough to go into a lot of detail it provides me with some ideas on preparing learners and trainers for training in this new environment.