E-lecturer Feedback of the Inclusion of Blended Learning in Undergraduate Occupational Therapy

By Paula Barnard-Ashton
Blended learning = combined and integrated use of e-Learning and face-to-face (F2F) learning activities to develop a community of learning [1-3]

The OT curriculum delivery has been a purely F2F, problem-based learning (PBL) design,

In 2009 blended learning was adopted:
- enhance the learning opportunities,
- optimise communication within the occupational therapy courses and
- alleviate some of the lecturer time resources
• Initially courses were designed in Blackboard (WebCT)
• For the 2010 academic year courses were migrated onto a Moodle platform.
• All lecturing staff developed and contributed to all the e-learning / online course environments.
• All OT students have access to the course for their academic year of study.
Aims of the study

- Document e-Lecturer behaviour in order to determine the level of uptake of blended learning by e-Lecturers.
- Determine e-Lecturer belief in the value of blended learning.
- Determine e-Lecturer attitude towards blended learning.
- Determine e-Lecturer Virtual Learning Environment tool preferences.

**Objective:** The results of the study would guide the initiatives and development of enhancements to the blended learning delivery.
Method: Participatory Action Research (PAR)

• 12 of the 13 full time lecturing staff participated.

• Conducted from January to May 2010.

• PAR involves a cyclical process.
PAR cycle

- Collaborate with stakeholders
- Define / identify the problem
- Implement the strategy/action
- Investigate the impact
The Problem

• Anxiety about migrating from WebCT to Moodle.

• Consensus that the VLEs were primarily used in 2009 for posting lecture notes or communicating notices to the e-Learners.

• E-Lecturer frustrations:
  – use of time (esp. ↑ F2F time-spend on individual student tutoring)
  – ↓academic output
  – ↓ manage their undergraduate teaching responsibilities
Participation Strategy

- The VLE platform (Moodle) would remain consistent during the 2010.
- The VLEs would be branded with the label “e-OT”,
  the characteristic colour of the curriculum year use to present an environmental “feel”.
- E-Lecturers attended a morning live Moodle training session.
- E-Lecturers would encourage e-Learners to use the discussion boards to post queries (instead of F2F meetings).
- E-Lecturers were encouraged to use the quiz tool to generate self-tests or formative assessments.
- E-Learners would attend a scheduled computer based training session which introduced them to the tools and functions of the VLE.
Facility of Health Sciences:
University of the Witwatersrand

Action

News, Announcements and Upcoming Events

Soccer Day 14 May 2010!!!

News forum
Common Chat
3rd Year Phone Tree
3rd year groups for 2010
Physical fieldwork timetable
Ethics Alive Week Programme
JUNE EXAM TIMETABLE
OCCT3001 EXAM CHANGE

Latest News

7 May, 13:17
Denise Franzsen
OS Exam June 2010 more...

7 May, 13:07
Denise Franzsen
Medicine and Surgery examination more...

3 May, 13:24
Lyndsay Koch
UPDATE ON JUNE EXAM TIMETABLE more...

29 Apr, 12:43
Lauren Mitchell
Wheelchair basketball more...
Investigation

• Reflection and comment on blended learning at the monthly staff meetings.

• Online survey, using surveymonkey.com, of the e-Lecturers beliefs and attitude at the end of the first term.

• E-Lecturer VLE access statistics logged at the end of the first term for the third and fourth year occupational therapy courses.

The data were collected in the second week of May 2010 and analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.
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| **e-Learner positive attitude** | ▪ students were enthusiastic about e-OT.  
▪ noticed the increased use of e-OT.  
▪ appreciated the availability of resources.                                                                                   |
| **Server and network inefficiency** | ▪ Chat rooms do not work when the whole class is online.  
▪ Class test quiz did not work with the whole class online, = rotated through the test (10-12 e-Learners at a time).  
▪ e-Learners and e-Lecturers are unable to access e-OT at times.                                                               |
| **Plagiarism monitoring software** | ▪ The lack of plagiarism monitoring software is of concern. It was available through the Blackboard platform.                           |
| **Success**                   | ▪ e-Lecturers feel that are generally able to use the tools on the VLE.  
▪ Most students were regularly accessing e-OT.                                                                                 |
Survey: e-Lecturers ranking of use of VLE tools

- Posting lecture notes online: 80.8%
- News forum / announcements: 71.8%
- Posting up video clips: 54.5%
- Discussion board: 52.6%
- Learning modules: 51.9%
- Assignments online: 48.7%
- Self-test quiz (formative): 45.5%
- Assignments offline: 44.9%
- Summative class test quiz: 37.8%
- Blogging: 37.2%
- Wiki: 36.5%
- Chat: 34.0%
- Podcasts: 23.7%
Review of the access logs indicated that
- 83.3% of e-Lecturers actively contributed the content on the VLEs of the third year course
- and 66.7% to the fourth year courses.

Both VLEs have been accessed by 100% of the e-Lecturers during the first term of 2010.
• Recommendations for the second cycle of the PAR:
  – The migration of the VLE platform to a larger, higher processor server.
  – e-Lecturers should be facilitated to use a broader scope of the VLE tools.
  – Sustain the impetus of blended learning within the DOT by presenting the results of this cycle to the e-Lecturers and triggering the start of the second cycle.
Conclusion

• The use of blended learning in undergraduate occupational therapy PBL curriculum delivery has indicated full initial e-Lecturer uptake and implementation in the DOT.

• Though there is still ongoing scope for development, the initial study indicated a sense of success and ownership by the e-Lecturers.
References


