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Blended learning and the professional development of on-campus teachers: A case study

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Abstract:

On-campus institutions are increasingly moving towards blended modes of delivery. In some cases, these blended programmes supplement existing offerings; in other cases, they replace them entirely. Regardless of the reasons for introducing blended programmes, teachers should engage in suitable professional development activities so they can successfully navigate the pedagogical and technical challenges they will encounter as they move courses online. The aim of this paper is to present a case study of a workshop, which equips on-campus teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to design and develop online courses. The paper first outlines the typical challenges faced by online teachers and some recent professional development initiatives that aim to facilitate the transition to online delivery. The paper then describes the initial structure of our workshop, the rationale for the initial workshop content, feedback received from workshop participants, and how the workshop content has evolved. This paper presents some planned future developments and best practice recommendations for other institutions considering moving courses online, in terms of the pedagogical, infrastructural, and technical needs of new online teachers and how the institution can facilitate the transition from on-campus to blended delivery.



Blended learning and the professional development of on-campus teachers: A case study

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Keywords:

teaching online; blended learning; technology-enhanced learning; professional development; online activities

Introduction

There are many different models of blended learning (Jones, 2007) and there is ‘no silver bullet that guarantees universal success’ (Fleck, 2012, p. 404). In 2014, recommendations were made to the European Commission that ‘all staff teaching in higher education institutions should receive training in relevant digital technologies and pedagogies as part of initial training and continuous professional development’ (High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education, 2014, p. 33).

This paper presents a case study of a face-to-face professional development workshop that equips workshop participants (teachers) with the knowledge and skills they need to design and develop blended or fully online courses. Workshop participants may wish to convert an existing on-campus course into an online course or design a completely new course for online delivery.

Situating the Case

New online teachers and students will encounter many barriers and challenges, which may be technical or pedagogical in nature, or both (Draffan & Rainger, 2006; Owens, 2012; Poon, 2013). Brinkerhoff (2006) cited four main categories of barriers, which included training and experience, resources, institutional and administrative support, and personal factors (e.g. attitudes or personalities). While many teachers report that they lack the necessary technical skills to use technology, it is vital that they know why they should use technology and how to teach effectively using technology (Fleck, 2012; Johnson, Wisniewski, Kuhlemeyer, Isaacs, & Kryzkowski, 2012). Teachers need to consider the needs and skills of students when choosing technologies, as students may be lacking the necessary technical skills and may require ongoing support (Draffan & Rainger 2006; Garrison & Kanuka 2004; Porter, Graham, Spring, & Welch, 2014). Furthermore, students and teachers need access to the required resources and infrastructure (Ellis & Phelps 1999; Garrison & Kanuka, 2004).

On-campus teachers who adopt the most basic blended approach by simply using their virtual learning environment (VLE) as a repository for materials (Fleck, 2012), are not likely to have the best possible outcome for teachers and students (Owens, 2012). Furthermore, strategies that work well in face-to-face delivery might not transfer so well online. To teach effectively online, teachers need to carefully consider their teaching strategies and, in many cases, devise new strategies. Teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and intentions may need to be challenged (Owens, 2012), particularly for teachers unaccustomed to student-centred teaching approaches. Online teachers will have to assume new roles as facilitators



Blended learning and the professional development of on-campus teachers: A case study

Authors: Darina M. Slattery, Ann Ledwith, Pádraig Hyland

(Garrison, 2003). Wolf (2006) states that faculty should be recruited specifically to teach online, not solely for their content expertise. Owens (2012) found that teachers with teaching qualifications who had received specific training in the use of technology for teaching were significantly more likely to use technology in an effective way.

There is often a lack of awareness of the time and effort required to design and deliver courses using technology (Reynolds, Treharne, & Tripp, 2003). In his study of elementary school teachers' perceptions of barriers to technology integration, Kopcha (2012) found that teachers consistently reported time as an issue, even when they had greater access to technology and training about how to use technology. In Owens' (2012) study of 529 university lecturers, 209 of the respondents reported negative experiences using technology—common reasons cited included unreliable and difficult-to-use technology and/or inadequate time to learn and maintain the technology.

Other challenges can be both technical and pedagogical in nature. For example, there is often a lack of awareness of the ongoing maintenance and support that will be needed by faculty, even after the course has been officially launched (Fleck, 2012; Kopcha, 2012; Owens, 2012; Wolf, 2006). While 24/7 help desks will not be an option for some on-campus institutions, online students place additional demands on institutional supports as these students do not tend to study during conventional working hours. For blended learning to be successful, there needs to be 'committed collaborative leadership that engages all levels of the institution' (Garrison & Vaughan, 2013, p. 24).

The various challenges outlined above can cause unnecessary anxiety for new online teachers. Furthermore, this anxiety can manifest itself in resistance to teaching using technology (Johnson et al., 2012). To help alleviate this anxiety, institutions can support new online teachers in a number of ways. For example, institutions can give teachers time off in lieu, to compensate for the additional effort required to convert a course. Alternatively, they can weigh blended/online courses higher than traditional courses in workload evaluations, provide some form of compensation, consider teachers' efforts in promotion and tenure, and/or hire additional tutors to facilitate course delivery (Johnson et al. 2012; Porter et al., 2014). Institutions can also support new online teachers by providing them with the necessary ongoing pedagogic and technical support (Garrison & Vaughan 2013), to help alleviate the challenges they encounter. The next section of this article outlines some professional initiatives that have been used for this purpose.



The Professional Development of Online Teachers

The Open University (OU) is renowned for its efforts to engage academic staff in professional development activities. The OU offers ongoing professional development events, such as their three-week 'Tutor Moderators' course, which introduces tutors to online facilitation (Macdonald & Poniatowska, 2011). In this course, the tutors (they are also the students) undertake tasks and share reflective messages with peers. In this way, tutors not only experience first-hand what it is like to be an online student, they are also presented with opportunities to discuss online challenges and successes. The OU also developed the 'VLE Choices' course, which focuses tutors' minds on teaching intentions and strategies, before suggesting some possible tools (Macdonald & Poniatowska, 2011). Many OU tutors engage in online communities with other tutors, where they discuss issues and challenges relating to online teaching.

Another notable initiative is Salmon's Carpe Diem learning design process, which has been widely implemented (Armellini & Aiyegbayo, 2010; Salmon & Wright, 2014). The Carpe Diem process comprises a pre-meeting, a one- to two- day workshop, a post-workshop event, and implementation. This approach has proven an effective mechanism for upskilling conventional on-campus teachers in online delivery methods (Salmon & Wright, 2014). The process takes a team of participants (typically online teachers, learning designers, learning technologists, and librarians) through a six-step process (Salmon, 2016). In stage 1, participants write a blueprint by agreeing on a mission statement and 'look and feel' for the new course. In stage 2, participants develop a storyboard by visually plotting the various components of the course (classes, assessments, and other activities) on A3 flip chart paper. In the third stage, participants develop an online prototype of their new course, by trying out some of the redesigned activities in the online platform. In stage four, participants perform a 'reality check' by asking other workshop participants to try out their prototype and offer feedback. Participants review and adjust the prototype in stage 5 and then develop an action plan (stage 6) whereby they decide what else needs to be done to complete the course, when it needs to be done, and by whom.

Carroll University devised a three-day faculty bootcamp to help teachers overcome the anxiety caused by technology adoption for teaching and learning, and to help them make progress in their online course development (Johnson et al., 2012). The first day of the workshop focuses on research in online learning, with participants reviewing readings beforehand. The second day offers an introduction and investigation of online tools, with participants engaging in hands-on activities with relevant technologies. The final day focuses on learning outcomes, content, and assessment and how technology can best serve participants' needs.

Blended learning and the professional development of on-campus teachers: A case study

Authors: [Darina M. Slattery](#), [Ann Ledwith](#), [Pádraig Hyland](#)

About the Case

The goal of this paper is to discuss how our professional development workshop evolved and to evaluate the usefulness and relevance of the workshop content, with a view to informing other practitioners who may also be embarking on similar professional development initiatives. At the time of writing, nine workshops have been delivered.

The workshop was initially developed in 2014 to meet an immediate need to create a new blended Certificate in Generic and Transferrable Research Skills. The Certificate programme was developed for PhD students in the disciplines of science and engineering, with a view to improving their research and writing skills. The programme covered diverse topics such as academic writing, research bibliometrics, and research ethics. While the courses typically ran for twelve weeks on-campus, teachers were required to condense them into five week courses (one on-campus week followed by four online weeks, with two courses delivered consecutively online). The on-campus courses also had to be re-purposed to meet the needs of PhD students.

The teachers for these courses were both on-campus lecturers and external tutors. Many of the teachers had minimal or no experience of teaching online. Previously, those who had experience of teaching online mainly used the institutional virtual learning environment as a repository for face-to-face teaching materials. Very few teachers had teaching qualifications and none had completed formal professional development in the area of online pedagogy.

To deal with the teachers' skills shortage, the Director of Continuing and Professional Education invited interested faculty and staff to contribute to the development of a workshop for online teachers. Faculty in the fields of instructional design and technology-enhanced learning, educational technologists, and other support personnel formed the workshop development team.

Methodology

We (the development team) employed action research to design, develop, and improve a workshop for online teachers. Action research involves "a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action" (Lewin, 1946, p. 38).

Unlike Salmon's Carpe Diem approach, whereby workshop participants immerse themselves in technology on day one, we agreed from the outset that we should provide some background on pedagogical theory before introducing specific tools, as it is an approach recommended by Johnson et al. (2012). Shepherd, Bolliger, Dousay, and Persichitte (2016) initially encountered issues with their standalone course on online teaching, as it focused more on tool learning than on design theory, so they subsequently



Blended learning and the professional development of on-campus teachers: A case study

Authors: [Darina M. Slattery](#), [Ann Ledwith](#), [Pádraig Hyland](#)

developed three courses, which focused on instructional design, technology and distance education, and communication in distance education. Furthermore, as the majority of teachers in our institution do not have qualifications in curriculum development, it was essential that they understood *why* they would teach a certain way, before exploring what could be done technology-wise. We felt strongly that the pedagogical needs should drive the technology choices, not the other way around (Boyle, 2005; Fleck, 2012; Jones, 2007).

Like Garrison & Vaughan's (2013) 'show and tell' meetings, we also agreed that a follow-on session should be offered to all workshop participants a few weeks after the main workshop. During this follow-on session, participants would be encouraged to showcase the work they have already completed and to highlight areas where they might need further pedagogical or technical support. Arrangements would then be put in place to provide the necessary support.

In addition to using best practice literature to inform the *initial* structure of the workshop, we used informal feedback offered during workshops, as well as end-of-workshop surveys to solicit qualitative feedback from workshop participants. The surveys, which comprised open-ended questions, focused on three themes: the structure and overall presentation of the workshop content, the relevance of the workshop for teaching, and recommendations for further development of the workshop. We used this feedback to inform the on-going development of the workshop.

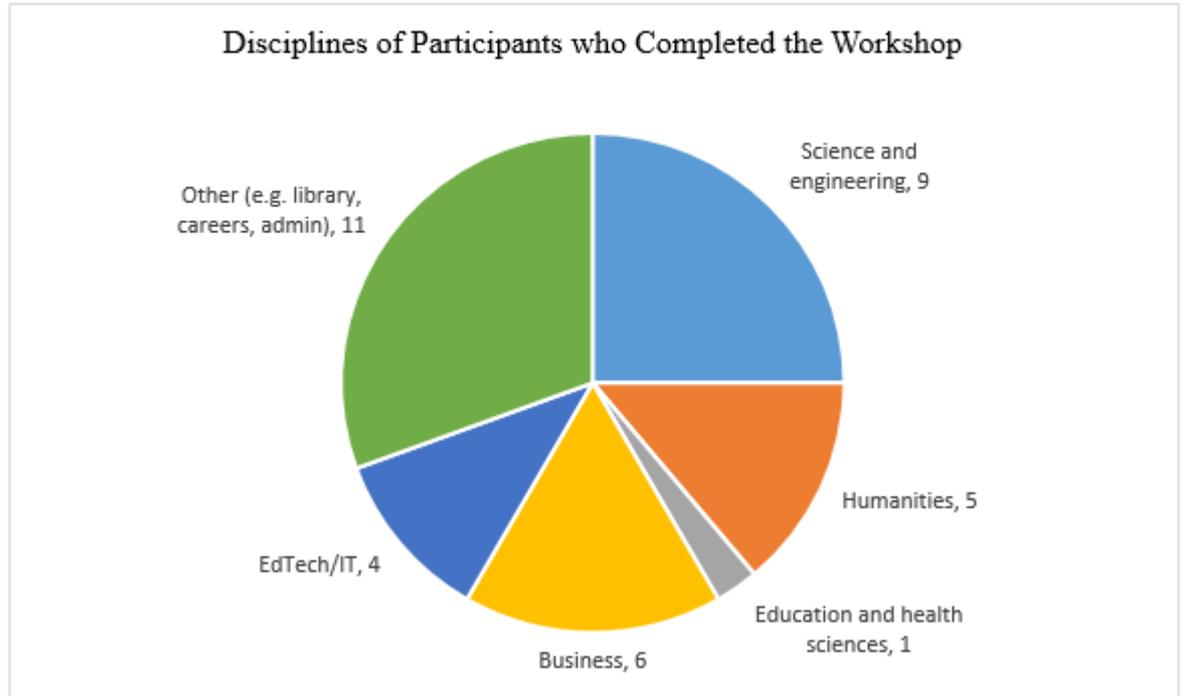
Results

Since the first workshop in April 2014, we have delivered nine two-day workshops, to 36 faculty and staff from different disciplines (see Figure 1). In addition, a further 21 participants have attended parts of the workshop, depending on their professional development needs and the extent of their involvement in course delivery. We collected qualitative survey data in seven of the nine workshops.

Blended learning and the professional development of on-campus teachers: A case study

Authors: Darina M. Slattery, Ann Ledwith, Pádraig Hyland

Figure 1: Disciplines of workshop participants.



Typically, four to eight participants attend each workshop. Preferably, all participants are from similar disciplines to facilitate programme design discussions, but this is not always feasible or necessary. Prior to attending the workshop, participants are asked to bring a laptop or tablet device, their course descriptors (syllabi), learning outcomes, and assessment specifications for the courses they wish to convert or create.

The workshop is delivered by a faculty member with practical experience in online delivery and experience teaching courses about e-learning and instructional design and the workshop is facilitated by the Educational Technologies Manager from the IT division.

The two-day workshop was initially structured into three parts: Part 1) Learning outcomes, objectives, and assessment alignment, Part 2) E-moderating, e-tivities, and tools, and Part 3) Prototype implementation.

Part 1 began with an introduction to learning outcomes, learning objectives, and assessment alignment. While the majority of workshop participants had prepared learning outcomes previously, many participants did not understand why learning outcomes were important or how they relate to course objectives and assessments. Participants needed to understand that objectives are only useful when they communicate to the learner 'what they

Blended learning and the professional development of on-campus teachers: A case study

Authors: **Darina M. Slattery, Ann Ledwith, Pádraig Hyland**

should be able to do after instruction' (Gagné, Wager, Golas, & Keller, 2004, p. 134). In early workshops, we introduced participants to Blooms' domains of learning and Gagné's learning outcomes. Bloom identified three domains (or types) of learning—the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domain (Bloom, 1956, 1964). The most widely cited domain—the cognitive domain—relates to commonly taught skills such as knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. While teachers might initially focus on teaching knowledge or comprehension, Bloom recommends the teaching of progressively more complex skills—evaluation is the highest level of cognitive ability. The affective domain relates to attitudes, feelings, choices, and values and comprises five levels (receiving phenomena, responding to phenomena, valuing, organisation, and characterisation). The psychomotor domain relates to any skills involving the co-ordination of physical and brain activities (Kennedy, 2007). While Bloom did not develop the levels for the psychomotor domain, other researchers—such as Simpson (1972)—subsequently developed the levels. Simpson identified seven levels of psychomotor skill (perception, mind-set, guided response, mechanism, complex overt response, adaptation, and origination). We also introduced participants to Bloom's taxonomy, which presents sample action verbs for each level within each domain—in that way, the taxonomy helps teachers write good objectives. We also spoke to participants about Gagné's five types of learning outcomes. Gagné elaborated on Bloom's cognitive domain, by identifying *three* types of cognitive outcomes—intellectual skills, verbal information, and cognitive strategies (Gagné et al., 2004). Gagné's attitudes and psychomotor skill outcomes are similar to Bloom's affective and psychomotor domains.

During workshop discussions, it emerged that there was a lack of understanding of the importance of aligning assessments with learning outcomes. In some cases, participants inherited outcomes and assessments from predecessors and saw no need to change them or had little time to revise the course substantially. By focusing workshop participants on the importance of assessment alignment, participants were more likely to devise *appropriate* assessment mechanisms, which would then have a positive impact on students' learning experiences (Biggs & Tang 2007; Kennedy, 2007). In some workshops, the discussion about learning outcomes resulted in participants redrafting their learning outcomes and/or assessments completely. Some participants had questions about how to assess online participation, so we discussed quantitative and qualitative techniques for doing so.

When developing the workshop, we were concerned that participants would be keen to try out the technology and would be less interested in the pedagogy behind online teaching. Fortunately, many participants appreciated the sessions on pedagogy, as demonstrated in the following quote: 'I thought the structure worked well, the background in the theory of instructional design was needed but we never went into information overload.' Another participant said 'there was a lot of new information presented over the two days – this is great (and preferable to too little) but I hope I remember it all'. Like Shepherd et al. (2016), we have found that getting the balance right between pedagogical theory, technical demonstrations, and course development has proven difficult, as it partially depends on the experience and dynamic of the workshop participants. One participant reported that she 'loved the size of the group – it meant that it was a very active learning experience and



Blended learning and the professional development of on-campus teachers: A case study

Authors: **Darina M. Slattery, Ann Ledwith, Pádraig Hyland**

there was plenty of scope and opportunity for collaboration, discussion, advice and questions'. Interestingly, the workshop that this participant attended was particularly interactive. However, due to the lengthy discussions about personal experiences with technology, we did not manage time effectively, resulting in insufficient time for storyboard development, as evidenced in the following quote: 'My main recommendations would be to perhaps cover a little less pedagogical theory.... More time should be spent over the two days on storyboarding and developing the module content etc.' Even so, another participant really appreciated the discussions, stating that 'letting the discussions around technology and our past experiences develop during the theory content helped to keep it active and engaged.'

To free up some time for more interactive activities and to address some concerns about the volume of pedagogical content covered, we later decided to remove Gagné's learning outcomes from the workshop structure and focus only on Bloom's domains of learning. We justified this decision on the basis that Bloom's domains of learning are typically covered on teacher training programmes, Bloom is widely cited, and his domains provide an *appropriate* introduction to learning outcomes for those with no prior pedagogy training. We also provided workshop participants with links to additional readings on learning outcomes, should they wish to learn more.

Part 2 of the workshop focused on strategies and models for delivering content and managing learners online. Salmon's work on e-moderating and e-tivities has been highly influential in the online teaching sphere (Salmon, 2011; Salmon 2013) and also influenced our workshop. We discussed Salmon's five-stage model of teaching and learning online, which helps online teachers scaffold learners as they progress at different rates through five phases of online learning (access and motivation, online socialisation, information exchange, knowledge construction, and development). We also discussed the importance of assuming different teaching roles i.e. not just being a sage-on-the-stage but also a guide-on-the-side or a facilitator of learning (Garrison, 2003). Many workshop participants expressed concern about assuming facilitation roles, which differed from their traditional teaching roles; in addition, they were concerned about the impact that facilitation would have on their workload. While online facilitation can be very time consuming for both students and teachers (MacDonald & Campbell, 2010; Salmon 2011), we explained to participants that there are methods, strategies, and models that can help ease the workload over time. Models that illustrate the workload involved in interactive activities, such as the one outlined in MacDonald & Campbell (2010), can prove useful when conveying this message to new online teachers. Martin (2003) found that the nature of the faculty load had the greatest influence on the implementation of online courses for the teachers in her study. Nonetheless, we felt strongly that participants should have *realistic* expectations about the effort and time required for online delivery.

We also presented e-tivities, which have been successfully adopted in a variety of online courses in different disciplines (Armellini & Aiyegbayo, 2010; Salmon, 2013). E-tivities are discussion-forum based activities that typically comprise a title (usually with some kind of 'spark'), a clearly stated purpose (objective), a task comprising step-by-step instructions,



Blended learning and the professional development of on-campus teachers: A case study

Authors: **Darina M. Slattery, Ann Ledwith, Pádraig Hyland**

and a response, whereby students comment on one or more contributions posted by peers (Salmon, 2013). In our discussions about e-tivities, we reminded participants of the importance of aligning each of the assessments and activities with the course learning outcomes (Biggs & Tang, 2007). Initially, some participants reported that they found it difficult to see how e-tivities could be used in their discipline, so we worked in small groups to develop customised e-tivities. We have since curated a collection of e-tivities from different disciplines and these examples are now available online.

At the end of the formal session on online strategies, we briefly presented some resources and tools that might prove useful to online teachers, such as writing and collaboration tools, social networking tools, presentation tools, and quiz tools. However, after one of the early workshops, one participant stated that she would have liked 'more on the technologies available and the possibilities of these... perhaps integrated with a group discussion/brainstorming session'. Another participant recommended a 'learning by doing format'. As we will discuss later, the revised workshop now incorporates more interactive exercises on day 1, thereby facilitating participants who wish to make *immediate* progress with their course development.

Part 3 of the initial workshop focused mainly on participants storyboarding their own modules for online delivery. In keeping with methods successfully adopted in the Carpe Diem approach (Salmon & Wright, 2014), participants used A3 flip chart paper, post-its, and markers to plot the content of their online courses and where formal assessments and e-tivities would be undertaken. Many participants appreciated this aspect of the workshop, as they were afforded time to think about their courses, free from electronic distractions, as evidenced in the following quote: 'I really enjoyed the time and space to storyboard and work on my e-tivities in the space of the workshop'. Many participants also appreciated the one-to-one feedback they received as they worked through their own courses: 'the instant feedback and discussion both from the facilitator and the participants was invaluable'. Another participant reported that she 'liked that the facilitators... were present for the whole thing and... I felt I was getting credible and informed feedback and suggestions'.

One participant said that it 'might be useful to have more examples of e-tivities (both good and bad)' and that these 'could be used as guidance after the workshop'. Another participant was interested in learning about grading with '[e]xamples of good and bad posts and what type of a post reflects an A grade'. A couple of participants said they would like to see more examples of best practice, in terms of how their courses should be presented on the VLE and the ideal structure for an online module.

While parts 1 and 2 of the workshop were largely facilitator-driven, there were opportunities for discussions throughout the workshop. However, as outlined earlier, sometimes there was insufficient time for participant-driven activities, which participants clearly desired. Table 1 presents the revised workshop structure, which incorporates some additional content and more interactive activities.



Blended learning and the professional development of on-campus teachers: A case study

Authors: Darina M. Slattery, Ann Ledwith, Pádraig Hyland

Table 1: Revised structure of the workshop.

Facilitator-Driven		Participant-Driven
<p><i>Part 1: Course Planning and Design</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bloom's domains of learning and taxonomy of objectives • Mager's characteristics of useful lesson objectives • Gagné's events of instruction • Performance assessment • Learning objects and tools for teaching online • Effective practice planning for e-learning 	<p><i>Part 2: Course Delivery</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salmon's five stage model of teaching and learning online • Salmon's e-tivities • Best practice guidelines for teaching and learning online • Educational technology/IT supports 	<p><i>Part 3: Storyboarding, Implementation, and Action Planning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop storyboards • Develop e-tivities • Perform a mini critical review of e-tivities • Plan for further development

In the revised version of the workshop (see Table 1), participants are introduced to learning object repositories and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). We introduce participants to these online resources because teachers can use them to learn about a topic of interest *and* to learn how other institutions design and deliver courses on topics of interest. To-date, we have found that the majority of participants have never participated in MOOCs or accessed learning object repositories, so they benefit greatly from an introduction to these online resources.

More recently, we have placed a greater emphasis on showcasing examples of online assessment activities. For example, on day one, participants now see examples of student blogs, e-portfolios, and discussion forum e-tivities and we discuss how these activities might be used in different disciplines. Participants also consult the teaching approaches menu, which facilitates discussions and decision-making in this regard (Sheffield Hallam University, 2014).

We now facilitate lengthier discussions and demonstrations of useful categories of tools for interaction and assessment. To support the workshop, the facilitator has developed an extensive list of online resources that can be used by online teachers. This resource list, which is updated on a regular basis, includes screencasts and links to tools that can be used for various purposes (e.g. blogging, file sharing, video making, mind-mapping, presentations, videoconferencing, and collaborative authoring). We recently developed an interactive presentation on how to choose tools for teaching and learning online, which has a similar objective to the Open University (UL) 'VLE Choices' course discussed earlier.

Blended learning and the professional development of on-campus teachers: A case study

Authors: **Darina M. Slattery, Ann Ledwith, Pádraig Hyland**

In line with earlier feedback about how to grade online participation, our online resources also comprise grading rubrics for various types of online activities (e.g. for grading reflective blog postings, for assessing e-portfolios, for assessing podcasts, and the like). Participants also have online access to sample e-tivities devised by the workshop facilitator and former workshop participants.

During workshop discussions, participants sometimes mention that they would like to be told how their courses should look and which tools they should use. However, as there is no universal user interface (Esselink, 2000), we instead present participants with best practice guidelines that can inform their decisions. As participants are not always aware of the IT supports and resources that are at their disposal at their institution, the workshop now includes presentations from our Educational Technologies Manager. Ellis and Phelps (1999) found that faculty should not be overwhelmed with tools and technologies they will not immediately use, so it is important to keep the focus on how technology can *enhance* teaching and learning.

In response to the feedback requesting more hands-on activities, participants now undertake a number of activities during the workshop, which facilitate course planning and design. Previously, the hands-on activities took place on the second day, but now several activities on the first day help keep participants engaged, and reduce workshop fatigue. Some of these activities are loosely-based on Salmon's Carpe Diem workshop activities (Salmon & Wright, 2014); others were devised based on participant feedback. Participants now use a live collaborative document to list the types of learning outcomes they are hoping to achieve and to determine if their assessment activities are aligned with their learning outcomes; if they are not aligned, they must propose a way to align them. Participants also use the collaborative document to propose a MOOC or learning object repository that could facilitate their teaching; they propose one activity that they would like their learners to be able to undertake online (e.g. collaborate on a report, discuss a topic, or reflect on learning); and they must devise a fully-structured e-tivity. Workshop participants then discuss each other's e-tivities and offer formative feedback. Finally, participants devise an action plan for continued development of the course redesign, based on the Carpe Diem action plan (Salmon & Wright, 2014).

The feedback from recent workshop participants provides evidence that the interactive nature of the workshop is welcomed, as evidenced in the following quote: 'This was an excellent two days. The combination of pedagogy, module planning and hands on exercises was very useful'. Another participant appreciated the instructive nature but also the opportunities to ask questions and receive feedback: 'The workshop referred to pragmatic programme/module issues in a manner that was instructive and developmental. For example, while required to respond to specific tasks, I was provided with practical assistance in relation to e-activities and preparing assignments etc.'

As the workshop participants come from diverse backgrounds and not all are directly involved in teaching (see Figure 1), we were concerned that the workshop content would be more relevant for some participants than others. Shepherd et al. (2016) were also



Blended learning and the professional development of on-campus teachers: A case study

Authors: Darina M. Slattery, Ann Ledwith, Pádraig Hyland

constrained by stakeholder needs, with administrators and teachers having different needs for their course on online teaching. One participant in our workshop (an established teacher) commented that it was 'one of the most useful and relevant workshops that I have done in [university name redacted]'. Another teacher, with a background in new media, said that she 'learned a lot about teaching in the online environment and a lot of things [she] hadn't thought about before'.

One administrator, who supports online teachers, stated that it gave her a 'background for supporting tutors in the online environment'. She also said that it was 'good to be able to relate the content design to the LMS'. Another administrator said that it gave her a 'background knowledge of what is involved to get a module online and the change of mindset'. One blended course administrator said that the workshop was 'most relevant for lecturers with no pedagogy background' and for 'lecturers without experience of online or blended learning'. As outlined earlier, Shepherd et al. (2016) developed three courses, each relating to different aspects of teaching online, so we may adopt a similar approach, to facilitate faculty and staff who already possess some relevant skills.

Planned Future Developments

The authors are currently working with colleagues on a number of developments that will enhance the effectiveness of the workshops even further. For example, the institution is developing an in-house e-moderating course tailored to meet the needs of online teachers and the multiple VLE platforms currently in use. As discussed earlier, the OU 'Tutor Moderators' course has been a successful initiative. Furthermore, our institution is developing a platform-independent online induction course that will prepare students for participation in online courses; this course will teach them, inter alia, about netiquette, how to use VLE tools, and how to learn effectively online. On completion of this online induction course, students will be better-prepared for online learning; also, integrating such a course into the orientation week before students start individual courses should mean they will not lose valuable course time learning how to use the VLE platform. Fleck (2012) and Garrison and Kanuka (2004) advocated the importance of student support for technical issues.

The authors continue to develop their suite of tools and resources to facilitate online teachers in the design and delivery of online courses. These resources include useful links, seminars, and screencasts on how to use technology to teach online (e.g. how to create a podcast, how to use Twitter, and how to collaborate on a Google document). The Educational Technology division is now also offering ongoing professional development workshops, which target specific skills. Additional follow-on sessions will be offered to workshop participants to ensure they are receiving the necessary support.

Best Practice Recommendations

This paper makes a series of recommendations for developing the skills and competencies of online teachers. Unlike Salmon and Wright's (2014) Carpe Diem approach, we strongly recommend the inclusion of some sessions on pedagogy and technology-enhanced



Blended learning and the professional development of on-campus teachers: A case study

Authors: **Darina M. Slattery, Ann Ledwith, Pádraig Hyland**

learning, before asking participants to try out technologies. Failing to do so can result in participants not knowing *why* they should use a particular technology, or not using the technology effectively (Fleck, 2012; Johnson et al., 2012). Workshop participants should be given a broad overview of the types of tools that are available, given the institutional infrastructure immediately available to them (Ellis & Phelps, 1999). They may also need to see examples of how other teachers in related disciplines have successfully used the technologies and be given time to experiment before committing to any particular technology. In addition, students might need training to orientate them to the online learning environment (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004).

For the transition to blended delivery to be as smooth as possible, we recommend getting buy-in from all relevant participants when designing online programmes e.g. management, programme directors, teachers, educational technologists, faculty librarians, and programme administrators. Online course design should be a team approach (Salmon, 2016). It is also essential to seek institutional support (including funding) to offer customised training to new online teachers (Garrison & Vaughan, 2013). Each of our workshops was funded by either the professional development unit or by the faculty unit developing the programme. The institution needs to have the infrastructure in place to ensure that teachers will have the necessary ongoing support; failing to do so, will likely lead to frustration on the part of teachers and poorly-implemented online programmes (Fleck 2012; Kopcha, 2012; Owens 2012; Porter et al. 2014).

Ideally, when a new online programme is being developed, the course team should agree on some general presentation guidelines, so the overall programme has a consistent look-and-feel. For example, the course team might agree on the typical structure per week, such as a 20-minute podcast, links to relevant readings, and a structured e-tivity; that said, the guidelines need not be overly prescriptive.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Work

This case study is of relevance to faculty and administrators in any higher education institution considering offering blended programmes, as it highlights the concerns that new online teachers frequently express and the challenges they typically encounter. In our experience, new online tutors are most concerned with the time and workload required (Kopcha, 2012). They are also anxious about technology, particularly as regards choosing *appropriate* technology amidst the myriad of tools available. While the majority of our participants volunteered to undergo professional development in this area, and are therefore somewhat enthusiastic about teaching online, informal feedback from them suggests that there is still significant anxiety amongst faculty members, particularly among those not adept at using technology in their teaching, and those teaching large classes. The only solution is for institutions to provide relevant training, resources, and support, which in turn will help individuals develop more positive attitudes towards using technology in their teaching (Brinkerhoff, 2006).



Blended learning and the professional development of on-campus teachers: A case study

Authors: **Darina M. Slattery, Ann Ledwith, Pádraig Hyland**

Our future research will examine the longer-term impact of these professional development activities, to determine the extent of teachers' confidence and readiness to deliver courses online; the MacDonald and Campbell (2010) study of the competence and confidence of tutors post professional development will prove useful in that regard, as will the use of more elaborate pre- and post- surveys. Kopcha (2012) found that mentors can have a significant role to play in promoting confidence in technology.

Given Owens' (2012) study of university lecturers, we are also interested in exploring how teachers deal with negative experiences using technology and if/how they engage in additional professional development to deal with these issues. As outlined earlier, time can be a recurring issue, even when training is provided and teachers have access to technology (Kopcha, 2012), so we are also interested in exploring how teachers manage their time, particularly as many of them have on-campus and online teaching roles. Finding time to engage in suitable professional development is a recurring complaint among our workshop participants, so we will explore how if/how micro courses and online resources can better serve their needs. Using a similar approach to that adopted by Shepherd et al. (2016), we might offer a series of certified micro courses, rather than a two-day workshop, which would make the professional development more accessible for busy teachers; micro courses would also help with issues of scalability. Kopcha (2012) proposed that offering a variety of professional development opportunities, such as workshops, in-class active learning, and situated learning activities, over a longer period may have a greater influence on teachers' long-term practices with technology.

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Blended learning and the professional development of on-campus teachers: A case study

Authors: Darina M. Slattery, Ann Ledwith, Pádraig Hyland

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Blended learning and the professional development of on-campus teachers: A case study

Authors: **Darina M. Slattery, Ann Ledwith, Pádraig Hyland**

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Blended learning and the professional development of on-campus teachers: A case study

Authors: Darina M. Slattery, Ann Ledwith, Pádraig Hyland

