

Why are we investigating this research question?

- To measure the impact of a blended approach to the teaching of Literacy.
- To identify the types of online resources and activities which can support Literacy learning.
- To identify delivery methods to most effectively incorporate Blended Learning.
- To gauge learner and teacher confidence in the use of technology.
- To collect learner opinion about a blended delivery model.
- To investigate models for planning Blended Learning.

Literature review

Gerstein, Jackie. June 2011 - **User Generated Education** - The Flipped Classroom Model: A Full Picture . Available from: <http://usergeneratededucation.wordpress.com/2011/06/13/the-flipped-classroom-model-a-full-picture/>

Littlejohn, A. and Pegler, C. (2007). Preparing for blended e-learning. Abingdon: Routledge.
Rochester Institute of Technology and Starenko, M. (2008) *Reflections on blended learning rethinking the classroom*. Rochester, NY: Lulu.com.

Stacey, E. & Gerbic, P. (2008). Success factors for blended learning. In *Hello! Where are you in the landscape of educational technology? Proceedings ascilite Melbourne 2008*. http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/melbourne08/procs/ta_crv.pdf

Garrison, R., & Vaughan, H. (2008). *Blended learning in higher education: Framework, principles and guidelines*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Defining blended learning:

There are different definitions of blended learning and the review of the literature and successful case studies indicate that the following are needed to create good blended learning models.

- A learner focused approach
- The appropriate technology is in place
- A collaborative approach
- The development of meanings of blended learning
- Course planning and development
- Time for staff development
- A supportive community of practice
- An approach which means that learners are not disadvantaged by being experimental guinea pigs
- Shared resources and economies of scale
- Time for learner development
- Clear expectations for learners
- Underpinned by pedagogical best practice
- Teacher facilitation of in-class and on-line

Each project team member thought about how they would define blended learning in the context of their practice and with the consideration of the learners involved.

Impact

A method for determining the delivery model was developed based on the learner profile and voice

16%
Student achievement raised

A collaborative approach to blended learning development fostered

Opportunities for mobile learning raised

Has allowed staff to think more creatively about the activities for learners

Staff confidence in using technology raised

Based on initial research a blended learning planning tool has been developed

A blended approach supported independent learning and further autonomy of study.

Has given staff the opportunity to gauge and harness the level of IT confidence of their learners

Creating online literacy resources from one area has created learning opportunities in other curriculum areas and support service areas.

Teachers became facilitators

The use of Blended Learning created a differentiated approach more suited to the varied learning styles and abilities for adult literacy learners

Student engagement raised

The approach

Topic chosen by learners. Activities created and adapted to support teaching and learning of topic.

Learners tested before input. *Smorgasbord* of activities for learners—both online and paper-based.

Learners tested after input. Results raised by an average **16%**.

Phase 2 of the project:

An approach developed based on what worked well according to staff and learners in phase 1. Building on the collaborative approach, a topic which would benefit a number of areas such as writing personal statements, was chosen.

Mobile technology investigated. Resources found and evaluated by staff.

Delivery methods planned. A shared online bank of activities and resources developed. Teacher reflected on collaboration.

Data collection methods

A consent form was created and a session booked to explain what participating in the research would mean to them. Confidentiality issues and the choice to withdraw from the research project at any time were explained.

A diagnostic test tracked in Moodle was used before and after the topic was delivered in a blended method.

An online questionnaire was used to collect data about technology use amongst learners and teachers.

The questionnaire was developed with the learners' level of English taken as a consideration.

A learner and staff focus group was conducted to elicit opinion about the method and activities used.

Teacher reflections collected.

Practitioner reflection/ observations

How will my paper-based activities be easily transformed into online equivalents?

- The paper-based activities worked well online with the inclusion of audio & images with interaction.

Will I have enough activities to last the whole session?

- There were more than enough activities.

Can I be a facilitator rather than a teacher: what's the difference?

- The activities were facilitated with the practitioner using questioning techniques to check learning and keep the pace going.

Will students be responsive and take responsibility?

- Students responded well and enjoyed a blended approach.
- The fact that many activities were tracked meant that the practitioner could review participation and understanding and use this to tailor and personalise follow-up sessions.

Findings

- A collaborative approach to curriculum development brought specific knowledge & expertise into the project.
- Learners felt very confident in using technology.
- Learners would like to see a blended approach used rather than just face-to-face or a fully distance model.
- It is possible to manage the introduction of online activities effectively in a classroom setting.
- Online resources need to have clear instruction and effective feedback.
- A *smorgasbord* approach with an end task encourages learner autonomy.
- Increased awareness of online resources has meant that e-Learning is considered in the design of activities
- Learners like online resources designed to be like games.
- Tracking progress online is beneficial to both staff and learners.
- Results raised by an average 16%.
- The creation of online activities which can be used by others has meant that practitioners are taking a more collaborative or whole College view of the support for literacy.
- The project was extended to include learning support teachers who help learners with literacy needs when doing assignments. This has resulted in the development of a shared bank of resources and worksheets to support a cross-college blended approach.
- A change in practice, was observed with a focus on facilitating learning and using new technology and resources such as literacy apps via ipads in sessions for demonstration, plus learner activity away from the classroom.

Recommendations

- Online aspects of a blended model should have a mix of activities.
- Practice and consolidation need to include both individual and group tasks.
- Re-think learning spaces to facilitate online activities to be introduced or referred to seamlessly.
- Curriculum design needs to be collaborative.
- Source and design robust online activities.
- Develop an approach to challenge practitioner.
- Resources are being developed to support staff to plan and evaluate resources and what activities would lend themselves to a blended approach.
- A shared understanding of what "Blended Learning" is should be established.

Strengths of the project: The project was a collaborative one between learning resources staff, the e-Learning manager, the Curriculum Manager in English & Maths and the practitioner. A collaborative approach to lesson delivery is generally unusual and it meant that staff could bring their individual expertise to the design of the lesson & materials. All participants in the project approached it with a spirit of research and experimentation, and a desire to learn from the outcome whether it was what was anticipated or not. Staff not involved in the project have benefited by using the resources created in their own delivery.

Armed with data about what worked well the project has widened to include Learning Support staff, and the same collaborative approach has been used.

Limitations of the project: The timescale meant the participating cohort was small. The blended method used was purposefully chosen in order to minimise any disadvantage to the learner. This meant that radical delivery models were not attempted.