Blended learning for academic development: a global challenge in a local context

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The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine is a world leading centre for research and postgraduate education in public and global health.

In 2016/17-
1,160 MSc & RD students based in London

3,274 distance learning students

822 members of academic staff

Approx 10% based overseas

The vast majority of staff would be expected to travel overseas for elements of their work and can be called away at short notice e.g. UK Public Health Rapid Support Team
Small team – 2.5FTE

Opportunities
- Embedded in academic expectations framework – probation and progression
- Keen for new skills and development
- High regard for students and student experience
- Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching is

Challenges
- High turnover of staff
- Short term contracts
- Culture of “not paid to teach” – many exclusively funded by research
- Approx 150 staff enrolled on PGCILT at any one time
Goal – Community of practice (Wenger, 1998)

How can we create a community of practice for academics who don’t / are reluctant to identify as teachers?

How can we use the opportunities provided by the global community of students to enhance the learning experience on the PGCILT Module 2?

Development through action research principles (McNiff, 2002)
Gilly Salmon 5 Stage Model (2013)
What steps did I take?

- Focus on one module – Module 2 (advanced level)
- Small sample size – 20 students
- Re-developed and designed curriculum delivery method
- Re-introduced expectations for engagement
- Use of Moodle and associated tools
- Termly face to face / Skype tutorials for one to one support
- Review engagement and refine for following term

Moodle
Forums

Twitter
End of session checklist

Blogging
Padlet
End of Session Checklist

Reading:
Select **one** of the action research readings available on Moodle

Follow-up task & Blog prompt:
Select a reading linked to action research and summarise the key points linked to the **Plan – Act – Observe – Reflect** cycle. How does this compare to changes made in your modules / courses? What approach is usually taken to instigate change?

**Assessment:** Activity review -> ongoing thinking for research proposal (Session 13)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More sustained engagement over time</td>
<td>Flurries of activity</td>
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<td>Students refer to previous content and assimilate in their own style</td>
<td>No synchronous learning</td>
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<td>Blogs are detailed and reflect deep engagement with material</td>
<td>Few opportunities for development</td>
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<td>Model approach for DL teaching – resource for others</td>
<td>Students own digital skills were underestimated</td>
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<td>Managing delivery of module</td>
<td>Feedback and responsiveness time lag</td>
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Where next?

• Refine the model – look at alternatives to Salmon

• Formalise feedback from students

• Consider synchronous elements e.g. Collaborate Ultra for induction specifically

• Review and refine content

• Extending the community of practice into the wider institution
References & Further Reading


Reid-Martinez, K. and Groom, L (2018) Online Learning Propelled by Constructivism Available at: http://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=recent_fac_pubs


Questions & Feedback

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