



HEA Pathfinder Briefing Paper: Educational Considerations for Blended Learning

Intended Audience: Academic and support staff in Higher Education

This paper presents one of the deliverables from the Pathfinder ENTICE Pathfinder project at Brunel University, that is, the *Educational Considerations for Blended Learning* resource booklet (Entice, 2008). The information discussed in this booklet is aimed to assist lecturers in creating their desired blended learning environment for their students. From extensive research, eight educational considerations were formulated, which should be considered by lecturers when designing a blended learning setting:

1. Outcomes-based

Alignment of learning outcomes, content and assessment is required.

2. Active

Students must be encouraged to create their own knowledge and understanding through engaging with learning tasks, activities and exercises.

3. Collaborative

Learning occurs through social interaction. Participation in group activities helps the learning process.

4. Student-centred

Accessible student learning opportunities are desirable, from anywhere, at any time, at any place. Such opportunities accommodate some of the characteristics, needs, experience, expectations and choices of students.

5. Learning styles

Students learn in different ways. The provision of learning resources in different formats is desirable; for example videos / photos / graphics / text, etc. will cater for different learning styles. An example would be that students who learn more effectively from hearing and seeing will benefit from a video resource.

6. Independent

The responsibility for learning is on the student. To support this, the lecturer may provide resource-linked tasks and assignments to help students to become self-directed learners. Personal responsibility and initiative is required by the students; assistance in developing goal setting ability and time management skills can be provided.

7. Feedback

Feedback helps students by allowing them to learn from confirmation of what they have done well and from their mistakes. Instant, rich and continuous comment should be provided to students on their actions and performance.

8. Reflection

Providing meta-cognition opportunities to students will enable them to monitor their progress as they learn and allow them to make changes and adapt their strategies if they perceive they are not doing so well. Meta-cognition refers to thinking about cognition (memory, perception, calculation, association, etc) and to think / reason about one's own learning.

ENTICE - through Appreciative Inquiry

In the booklet, each educational consideration is discussed in turn and evidence from research literature is provided to support the consideration (see Figure 1). Furthermore, virtual learning environment (VLE) tools are listed which, if implemented appropriately, can be used to implement the educational considerations (see Figure 2).

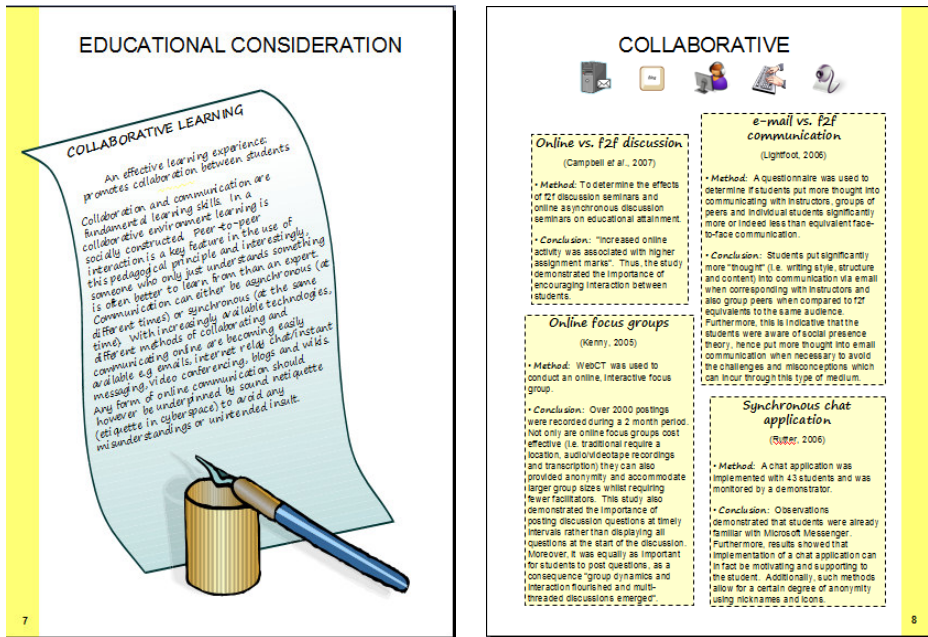


Figure 1: Excerpts from the booklet. Discussion and evidence regarding "collaborative learning".

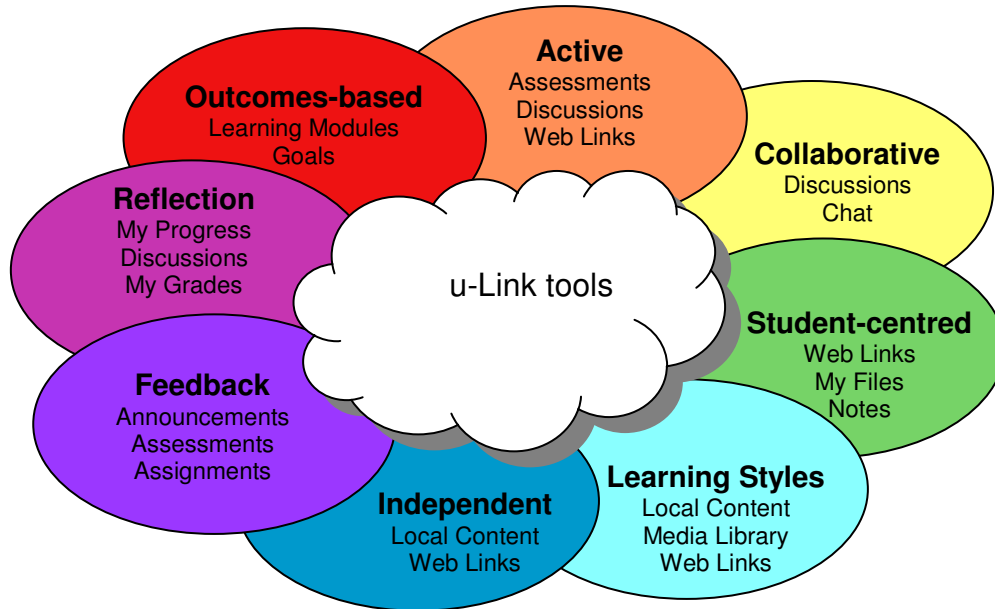


Figure 2: The spectrum of eight educational considerations and the associated u-Link (VLE) tools and features to implement them.

References

Entice (2008). <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/life/study/computing/weblearn/enticepathfinderproject/>