

# Blended Learning: Is it Time to Share?

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## ABSTRACT

Blended learning, the process of teaching using a mix of traditional classroom forms with technology based instruction has shown to produce positive educational outcomes. The problem for many educators is having neither the time nor resources, nor the training to produce the materials necessary to fully implement this approach. This paper aims to open a discussion on a possible way of addressing this issue for ITP academics teaching Information Technology courses.

## Categories and Subject Descriptors

K.3.1 [Computers and Education]: Computer Uses in Education – *collaborative learning, computer-assisted instruction (CAI), computer-managed instruction (CMI), distance learning.*

## General Terms

Management, Design, Economics, Human Factors, Legal Aspects.

## Keywords

Blended Learning, Course Development.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Good quality blended learning has the potential to provide positive education outcomes over other forms. For example the University of Central Florida [1] reported that over five quarters in 2009 and 2010 the blended learning courses produced higher student ratings, higher student success, and higher retention rates than either face-to-face- or fully online courses. While New Zealand ITPs are using various blended learning approaches, each institute apparently develops its own materials and thus leading to considerable duplication of effort.

In 2007 the ICT Strategic Framework for Education [2] included the following action among others to achieve its education goals “Establishing and maintaining a cooperative culture and communities that support and nurture innovation, creativity and the sharing of ideas and practices.”

This paper discusses the possibility of a coordinated sharing of resources to help improve blended delivery throughout the ITP sector.

## 2. WHY SHARING WOULD BE DESIRABLE

### 2.1 Time

Online resources are time consuming to develop and academics have to make decisions as to where to invest their time. Information Technology is changing rapidly and needs constant attention to ensure courses are current so the decision often is, do I improve the delivery or make sure the course material is up to date. Allied to this is the issue, changes will be probable for the next run of the course, so is it worth trying to produce high quality material when it will be much easier to adjust a few PowerPoints.

### 2.2 Resources

The more sophisticated teaching materials may also require resources that are not readily available to all academics.

### 2.3 Training

Rosenberg [4] points out the need for developing and motivating staff to produce appropriate material. Just because a person is knowledgeable enough to teach aspects of IT that does not automatically mean that they have the ability to produce quality online education material.

## 3. IMPEDIMENTS TO SHARING

### 3.1 Ownership

Some ITPs claim ownership of teaching materials produced by their staff and this could cause institutes to be hesitant to share.

## 4. A SUGGESTED APPROACH

The suggestion put forward for discussion is that CITRENZ sets up a special interest group (or similar) tasked with some or all of the following roles.

## Blended Learning: is it Time to Share?

Do you wish to use a blended learning approach in your teaching?

Do you have the time, resources, and training to produce first class blended learning materials?

Can you help others by supplying such resources?

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The Ministry of Education wants us to  
Establish and maintain a cooperative culture and community that supports and nurtures innovation, creativity and the sharing of ideas and practices.  
ICT Strategic Framework for Education



Should CITRENZ provide a facility to

- 1) Make material available to all CITRENZ members
- 2) Share experiences between members
- 3) Help coordinate endeavours across member institutes
- 4) Make available reviews of materials from all sources
- 5) Record wish-lists of potential materials

#### **4.1 A Material Repository**

The group could maintain a repository accessible to CITRENZ members that contains materials suitable for use in blended learning environments. The contents would include such items as videos, quizzes, teaching apps etc. These would not be complete courses but rather modules that would be included as required by the course developer.

#### **4.2 A Cooperative Approach**

A second role could be to act as a central coordinator to link developers who are working in similar subject areas

#### **4.3 An Advisory Role**

Another role could be to record ratings on available materials, not just those that were in the registry to point others to useful sources and warn them of others that maybe less reliable. The group would merely record reviews submitted by others, not be tasked with producing reviews themselves. .

#### **4.4 A Suggestion Box**

The group could maintain a list of suggestions from developers who may not have the capability of developing the required resource themselves. A "like" facility could signal that a number of people desired the same resource. A willing developer might then be found.

#### **4.5 A Forum for Discussion**

A facility could be provided where members could post their experiences of old or new techniques, and seek guidance for new ventures.

### **5. THE OWNERSHIP ISSUE**

A possible solution to the Intellectual Property issue would be to produce all material under a suitable Creative Commons License [3] which would allow the free sharing of the materials. Institutes might forego some potential revenue, but in return they would gain access to a much larger pool of material.

### **6. REFERENCES**

- [1] Benefits of Blended Learning, Retrieved August 15, from University of Central Florida:  
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<http://creativecommons.org.nz/licences/licences-explained/>
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