The Challenge of Designing Blended Courses: from Structured Design to Creative Faculty Support!

Les beaux défis du design de cours hybrides : du design structuré à l'accompagnement créatif !

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Abstract

This case study deals with the implementation of an e-learning program in a business school in Canada. Cabot Business School decided to offer the program in a blended format so as to increase the flexibility of the program for clientele enrolled in the undergraduate certificate program. A pilot was initiated in 2009 starting with four hybrid courses. Now, three years later, 35 courses are being offered in blended mode by lecturers and a handful of professors who, for the most part, had no previous experience teaching online. Given the rapid development of this program, this case deals with how the instructional designer, without the benefit of any additional resources, managed to juggle both the development of the certificate program as well as parallel projects. The issues encountered deal with the extent to which the instructional designer can support faculty who are converting their courses from in-class to online, one of the main design challenges encountered by faculty. This case describes training strategies and implemented solutions provided by the instructional designer as well as the results obtained, faculty perceptions, and food for thought on the possible evolution of the role of the instructional designer.
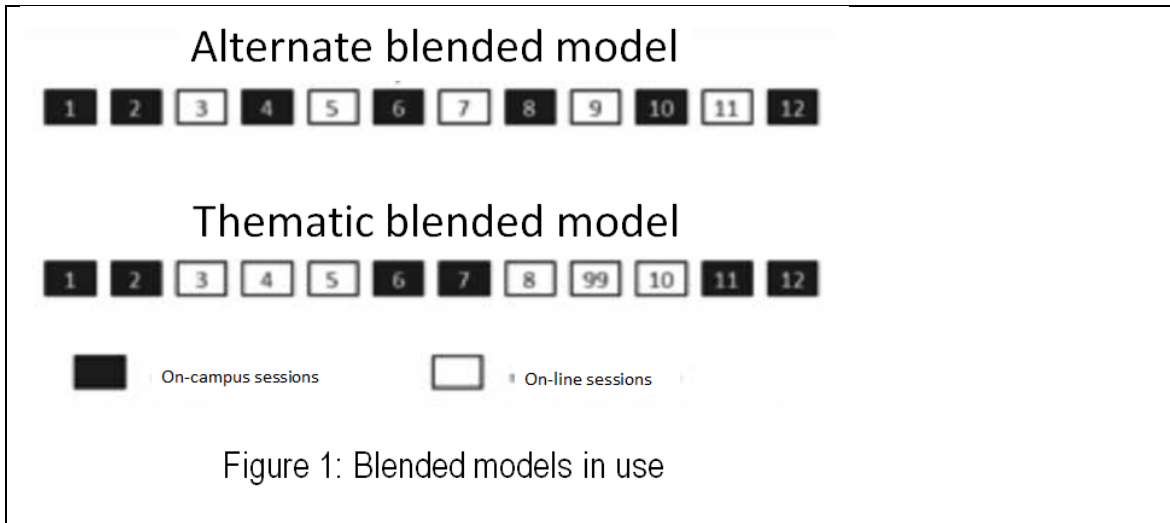
Key words: Canada – certificate program – blended learning – alternate design model – course conversion – training strategies – instructional designer workload
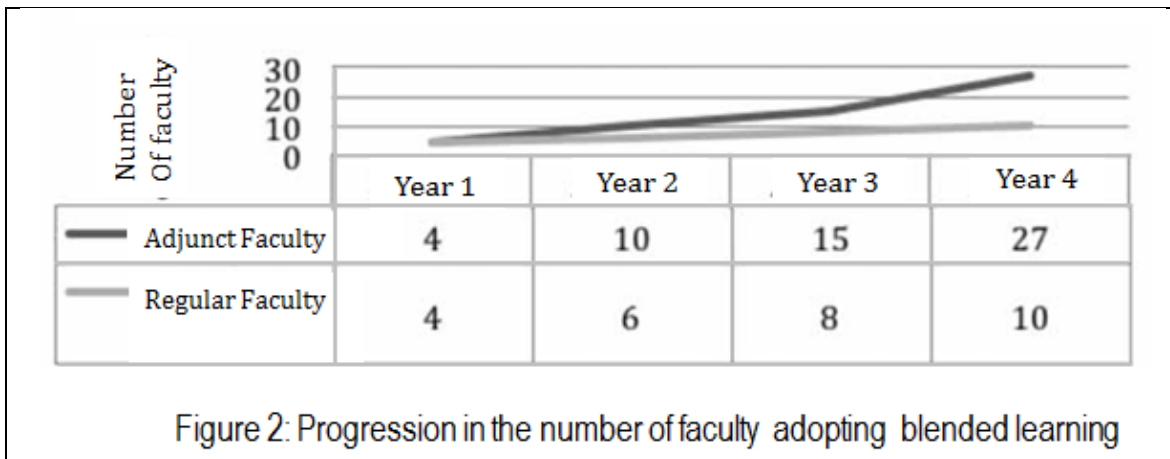
The institutional setting

The Cabot Business School, part of a large Canadian university, has enrollments of 12,000 students with about half these enrollments in an undergraduate certificate program. The certificate program director has the mandate to develop the online component. The idea of using a blended approach, which combines the advantages of on-campus teaching and the flexibility of online learning, has been fully adopted. Blended courses provide students with the kind of flexibility they need to juggle work, study and family lives.

Within the blended approach, two different models have been implemented in the pilot project, a **thematic** model and an **alternate** model (see figure 1). Starting with the **alternate** model, an on-campus class is followed by an online class right up to the end of the course. In the **thematic** model, blocks of two on-campus classes are followed by a block of three online classes. A new virtual classroom system has been added to other asynchronous technologies available at the university.

During the first year, the development of the blended courses was in full swing. The first four blended courses included three courses in the field of management and one in the field of logistics. Four faculty members were involved. In year two, six new faculty members joined the project. In year three, eight new faculty members joined and in year four, ten new faculty (see figure 2), mostly seasoned lecturers. Simultaneously, several other projects linked to online learning were also underway in other faculties and schools.

Figure 1: Blended models in use

Rather than looking at the evolution of any one course in particular, this case study focuses on the support offered by the instructional designer to faculty specifically related to course design and delivery of these blended courses.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Adjunct Faculty	4	10	15	27
Regular Faculty	4	6	8	10

Figure 2: Progression in the number of faculty adopting blended learning

A huge challenge!

The actors:

Jane: a senior instructional designer

Sandra: an instructional designer

Faculty: Year 1: Bernard, Julia, Natasha (adjuncts); Andrew (full time lecturer)

Faculty: Year 2: George, Vivian, Alexander, Adrian (lecturers); Eve, Lewis (full time lecturer)

When Jane joined the instructional team in November, the first four blended courses were already being offered as part of the pilot project. Jane, as a former senior designer for a private instructional design company, had previously worked on a number of online training projects including in-class training, virtual classroom training, multimedia training, simulations, as well as electronic performance support systems. She was used to developing training strategies, structured development methodologies, designing online courses (both asynchronous and synchronous); she was also used to managing budgets, human resources, working with a multidisciplinary team, as well as supporting clients from virtually every field. She also had experience at the college and university levels, specializing in distance education where project management was her forte. Now, in her new position, she was discovering a new reality. Sandra, Jane's colleague, was working with her on this new pilot project, and brought her up to speed on how things worked at Cabot Business School:

> "*For this blended courses pilot, we're using regular tools for asynchronous delivery:* Zonecours*, which is an online course syllabus tool, Jive, which is a forum tool,* QuestionMark*, the tool for developing quizzes and* Drupal *for our blog. We're also using a new tool,* VIA*, which is a virtual classroom solution. With VIA, faculty can make presentations online, interact with their students, and use tools such as the microphone, chat, surveys, and whiteboard. Since June, I've been in charge of training and supporting our faculty members. For instance, Andrew has already offered distance courses*

at another university. As for the others, it's a totally new experience. Julia is used to using technology, even Web 2.0 tools. In fact, I've mostly worked with Bernard and Natasha to help them redesign their courses. And I'm also helping Natasha get up to speed using the virtual classroom. In addition to this, there are two other pilot projects which have been taking a lot of my time. We are experimenting with a lecture capture tool called Tegrity, *which records in-class lectures for subsequent online viewing by the students. We are also testing the delivery of optional* help sessions *in virtual classrooms*."

Sandra was a member of the committee in charge of the pilot project, monitoring various pedagogical, organizational, and administrative aspects of online learning at the university. She also had produced technical documentation on the tools being used, as well as having designed and facilitated training sessions for students about how to use the virtual classroom. Jane was really impressed with Sandra's work! How could she have done so much in so little time? "*Well, to be honest, I've lost sleep over this as well as quite a few weekends. I'm at the point where I'm not counting my hours anymore!*"

Over the course of the following year, it had been decided that the blended courses project would be expanded, especially given how well things had gone that year. At the same time, another international online training project for a graduate program was starting to gather steam. Yet another challenge on the horizon!

Meta-reflection: cultural shock

Jane was thinking to herself: "*I think I'm experiencing cultural shock! I'm finding that the kind of work I'm doing now is quite different from the kind of work I've previously done in the private sector and in institutions that are solely involved in distance education. I am used to developing courses with a multidisciplinary team, using a project management approach and a structured process with deliverables and clearly established outcomes.*
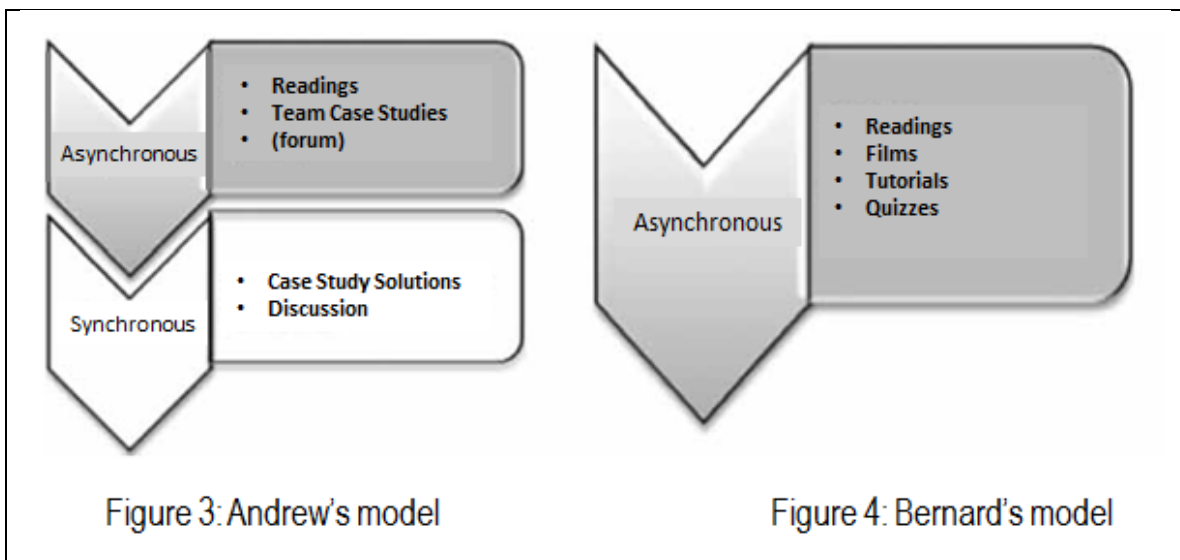*In this university, it is like we are pioneers having to cut down entire forests when implementing a blended approach; the course design has to be ultra-rapid, done within*

one term, without a multimedia development team, without any resources, simply an instructional designer working with a faculty member. I'll just have to adapt or ...maybe I can propose a slightly different approach..."
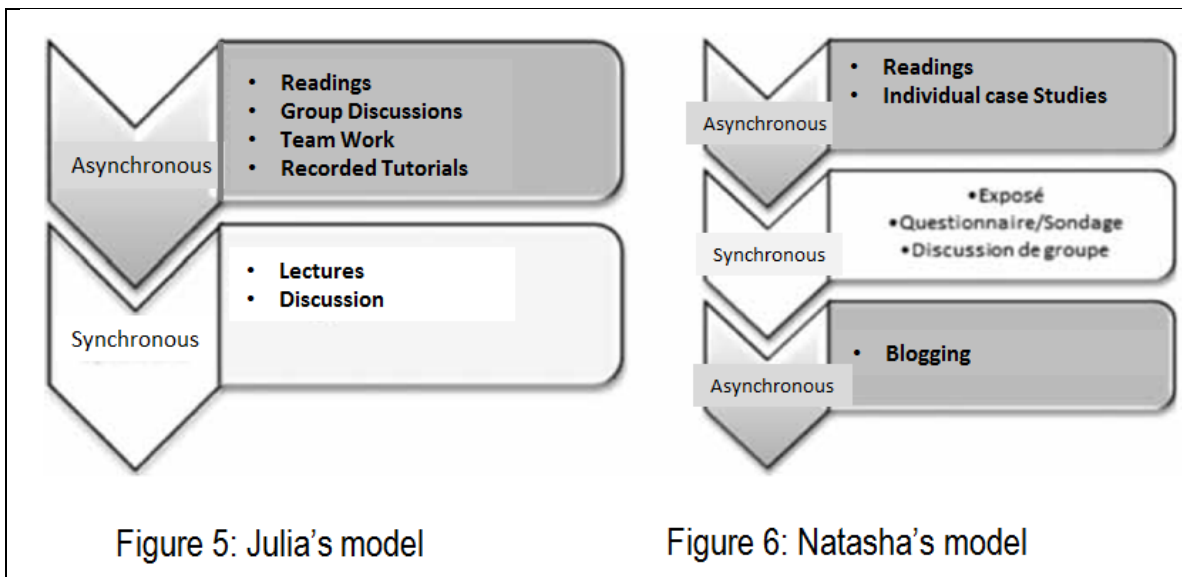
Year one

Course Design

With regard to instructional design, each of the courses developed used a different approach. Andrew opted for the alternate model. His sessions combined both asynchronous and synchronous activities. His course was based on a case study approach; the students, after completing the readings, had to solve the case by working in teams within an online forum. The follow-up, virtual classroom session was devoted to discussing the case studies. Students could ask questions in order to clarify their understanding of content (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Andrew's model   Figure 4: Bernard's model

Bernard, on the other hand, opted for the thematic model and his virtual sessions took place in asynchronous mode over a three-week period. His course content was broken up into blocks and modules; students were expected to view the PowerPoint presentations with an audio track at their leisure and then, to do an online quiz within a period of three weeks (figure 4).

Figure 5: Julia's model   Figure 6: Natasha's model

Julia and Natasha both opted for the alternate model with both synchronous and asynchronous activities, with Julia also adopting Web 2.0 tools. Students used collaborative tools such as *Google Group* and *Google Docs* (which became *Google Drive* later) to work together, and then attended weekly virtual classes (figure 5). Finally, Natasha posted weekly readings and case studies that she expected her students to do on their own. Then she used a virtual classroom to deliver her course, returning to the case studies for discussion. After the virtual class, students were expected to write a private blog entry on which they would receive feedback (Figure 6).

An initial progress report

At the end of the fall term, Jane and Sandra decided to assess the online courses by asking students to fill out a questionnaire that was designed specifically for each of the blended courses. They also asked faculty members to complete a questionnaire. After receiving student feedback, Jane met with each of the faculty members to discuss the results and to assess whether, or how, to make adjustments to the blended courses. It was Sandra's first contact with Bernard and Andrew.

In Bernard's course, over one third of the students said they felt isolated and they wanted to have more contact with their peers. Jane suggested that Bernard add an optional weekly synchronous virtual class to allow students to interact with one another. In Andrew's course, it was realized that case study discussions in the forums were not very lively. Jane queried, "*Would adding a few points for such activities motivate the students to get involved*?" As for Natasha's course, students responded by saying that they felt a little lost: there were many tools to use and there were many activities to do. Jane suggested adding clearer guidelines to help students figure out what they had to do. Finally, in Natasha's course, technical problems occurred during the virtual classroom, most of them related to sound quality; these technical problems were upsetting to everyone and had to be solved. Moreover, some students had enrolled without knowing that this course was being offered in blended mode. Everyone agreed that more information was needed at the time of registration to better inform potential students.

A progress report of the first year of activities

At the end of the winter term, student feedback improved; they were generally satisfied with the hybrid courses. Jane met with faculty members individually to go over the progress reports. Faculty also were fairly satisfied with their experience. They were quite proud of having met this challenge, of having used a new pedagogical approach, of having learned about new tools, of having experienced a new level of flexibility provided by the blended approach. However, they had a few critiques:

"We often did not have a clear idea of where our project was going, and that was frustrating!"

"I spent a lot of time adjusting and readjusting my course, and I did so without any added compensation. I agreed to participate in this project mainly because I was afraid I would not be given this course to teach if I refused".

"I felt rather isolated during the process, I would have liked to have known what my colleagues were doing, and what colleagues and other universities are doing. Communications were really faulty..."

The pilot project was continued for a second year. During the month of April, six new courses were added to the program with a delivery date of September 1. Six new faculty members came on board.
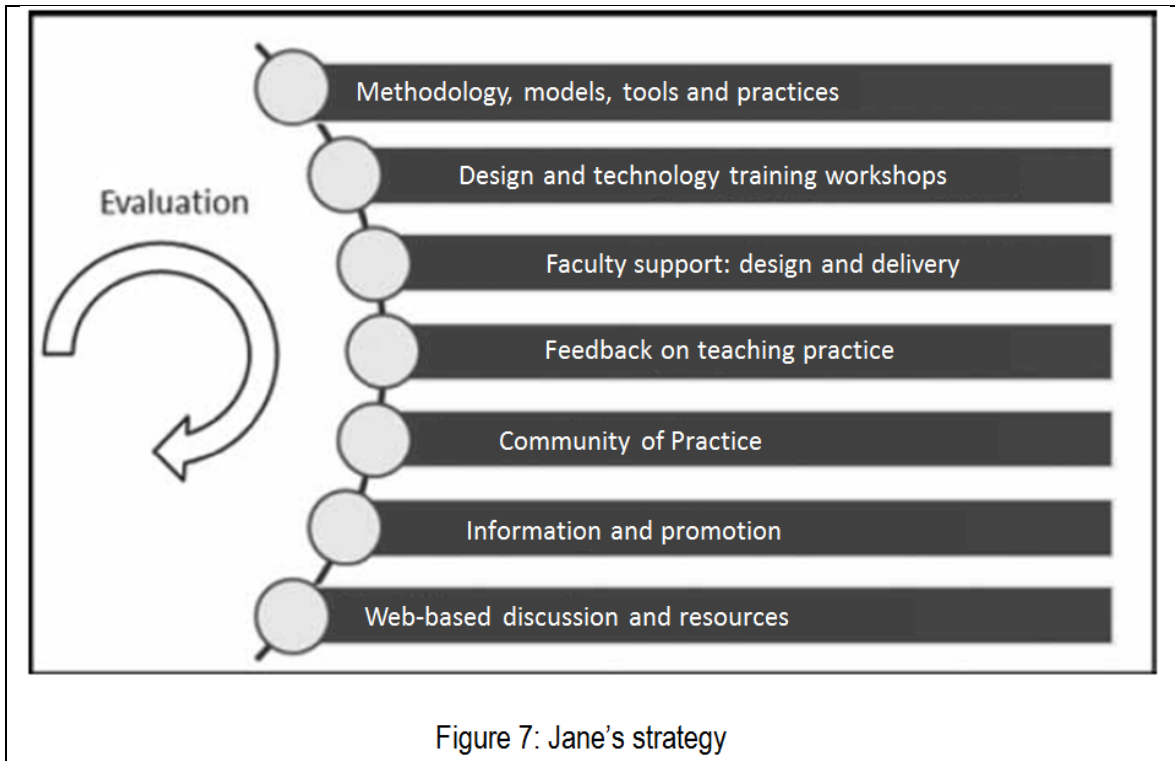
Meta-reflection: a huge challenge

Jane was wondering to herself: *"How am I supposed to assist the six new faculty members, all new to online learning, in redesigning their courses? How can I provide them with quality feedback and support? How can I personalize my feedback and adapt it to their teaching styles? How can I help them develop expertise and autonomy in learning how to teach online? How can I increase communications and share information between all of the people involved in these pilot projects? And moreover, how can I manage even more projects?"*

Year two

Jane's strategy

What Jane found stimulating about this project was that they were virtually starting from scratch! Individually assisting faculty members was fine, but maybe not the best way. Based on her experience from year one, some faculty members preferred to work alone whereas some had very little availability. Moreover, she realized that communications were an important component in any project of this kind: wouldn't it be nice if the faculty members could get together and share what they'd learned? Moreover, how is it possible to design an online or hybrid course without a set methodology? Without any tools? Without even a model? So, besides simply assisting faculty members, Jane thought it'd be useful to add a few activities and to develop some additional resources for them. Regular checks among faculty members should allow her to adjust her work based on their needs (figure 7).

Figure 7: Jane's strategy

In addition, Jane came up with a few guidelines to help her train faculty members:

- Develop a training program which would satisfy needs expressed by the faculty (based mainly on tools acquisition), as well as the instructional designer herself (based mainly on instructional design technique).

- Adopt iterative development: use rapid prototyping to quickly develop these training sessions in response to known needs. Adjust and adapt as needed.

- Develop an active and task oriented training: Promote discussion among participants; Use a workshop format.

- Think modular training: Develop training components lasting about 30 minutes each

- Train just in time, just enough: Provide training when faculty were available and at key moments.

- Use blended training: Combine different formats and presentation modes, in class and online (in both synchronous and asynchronous modes).

So, everything looked good on paper! Now all she had to do was implement it.

Methodology and tools

Jane was wondering what methodology should be used to support their blended learning course design. Some of the methodologies with which Jane was familiar didn't really apply; they were either too complex (such as instructional engineering methods which were overly detailed for course design) or not relevant to her setting. It wasn't actually a matter of developing a course, but more so of converting half of the course sessions into online sessions, while taking into account various limits. Moreover, Jane, like most of the instructional designers she knew, felt it was important to adapt course development methodology to real-world situations. In this project, Jane wasn't really playing an instructional design role; she was more of a guide, assisting faculty. She started thinking about simply using the ADDIE approach, presenting the main steps which would guide faculty members in the redesign of their respective courses (figure 8); in doing so, she would simplify terminology and adjust the approach to the faculty perspective. She felt that by doing this, it would be easier to develop her training modules and to insert tools to facilitate working processes rather than trying to find a design methodology, per se.
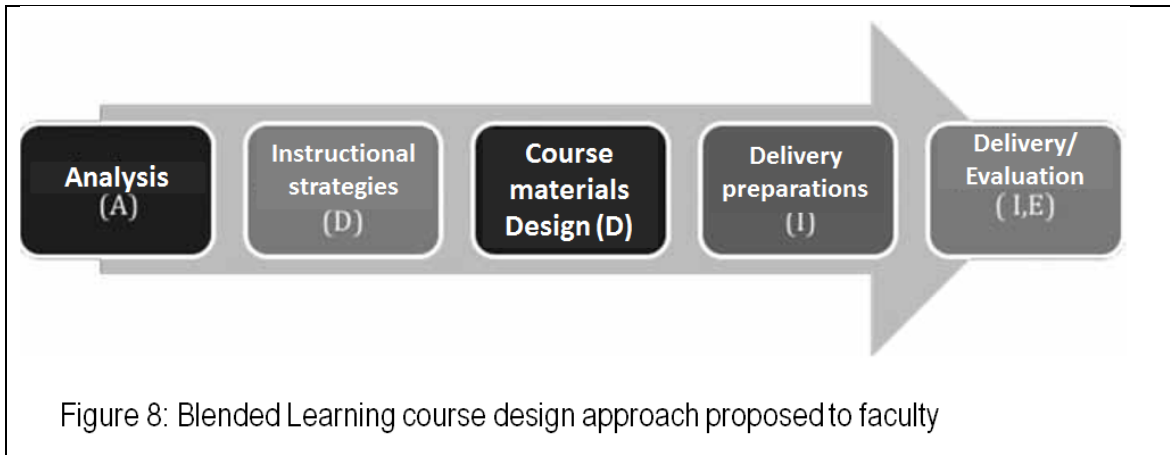
Figure 8: Blended Learning course design approach proposed to faculty

The important steps, which are often neglected by junior instructional designers, were those of needs analysis and design. These two steps would be highlighted in her training modules which would bring faculty members together, allow them to ask questions, and provide them with an understanding of instructional theory, pedagogy and technology, so that they would be better able to make informed design choices. As for the design step, which she renamed "instructional strategies" Jane would provide them with ad hoc support, based on individual needs. The "course materials design" phase was of course the **development** step in the ADDIE approach. Within the framework of blended courses, faculty members would have to adapt the course materials for online delivery; in some cases, faculty might want to record podcasts or add online quizzes.

The *delivery preparations* phase was of course based on the **implementation** step in the ADDIE model. In fact, Jane was responsible for making sure everyone understood the importance of preparing to deliver their courses in a virtual classroom. During this phase, Jane provided faculty with training opportunities in the virtual classroom during which time faculty could practice using the online tools, address technical difficulties and learn how to resolve problems as they occurred. Finally, as for the *delivery/evaluation* phase,

which of course corresponded to both the **implementation** and **evaluation** steps in ADDIE, Jane felt these two steps could be combined into one step (since, in practice, they are usually inseparable). The first four steps thus involve *design* and *delivery preparation* whereas the 5th step is, for faculty, linked to the deployment of the course during a given university term.

Meta-reflection: who is analyzing what? In thinking about the analysis phase, Jane wonders who actually does needs analysis within the institution. Of course, needs analysis can take place at several levels: institutional, faculty, instructional designer, or even at the individual instructor level. At each level, different questions need to be asked. For a faculty member, there's an even more basic question having to do with his or her needs: *"How much time can I devote to redesigning my course for online delivery?"* The answer to this question would necessarily have a huge impact on design choices.

First contact

In the spring, Lewis, Ivan, George, Vivian, Alexander and Adrian joined the project for year two. Jane introduced herself to these faculty members.

Lewis had a very clear idea of what he wanted to do in his course. Already, his website was very well structured: he was using various instructional strategies, demonstrations, exercises, simulations and he also had a frequently asked questions (FAQ) section. For his online sessions, he had opted for an asynchronous approach and had developed multimedia podcasts for various demonstrations that he usually did in the classroom. He also decided to use the synchronous virtual classroom to field questions from students. He seemed quite confident and very enthusiastic. He was also very autonomous and did not seem to need any help from her, except for perhaps providing some training in the use of the virtual classroom.

Ivan and George also wanted training on how to use the virtual classroom. Jane met George several times to provide him with some individual support, helping him adapt his course for online delivery.

Meta-reflection: online learning = tools? As Jane started to plan her training workshops, she realized that most of the faculty members were more interested in learning about the technology tools, rather than the pedagogy related to online learning. This made her wonder if she were being perceived as a technical trainer on teaching technologies rather than as an instructional designer. Suddenly, during this term, there was a shakeup in the administration. Jane's team, which had been part of the University's computer service, was disbanded. A new independent service, directly linked to the University administration, was created and would now be headed by a faculty member. Jane saw this development as promising since her role was no longer linked to the University computer services.

The first workshop

It was now June. Jane had sent out invitations to the new faculty members who had joined the project. Even thought it had been very hard to find a time when everyone was available, the first workshop with this new group of faculty members was about to start. This was the opportunity for Jane to meet faculty members Alexander, Adrian and Vivian as well as to see Ivan and Andrew again, whom she already knew.

The goal of this first workshop, entitled "*From on-campus to online*", was to help faculty discover the large variety of possibilities (pedagogical, technical, media-based) that existed to transform their courses from on-campus delivery to blended delivery. Jane started the workshop with an individual concept-mapping exercise on online learning, followed by group sharing. This activity gave her insight into each participant's understanding of online learning: on some maps, she noted a predominance of tools and technology, on others, she saw the human dimension, and on others still, various

pedagogical considerations. This was a great group: intelligent people, very enthusiastic and open to new possibilities!

"*This is a good crop*!" Jane was thinking. It was an opportunity for her to present her methodology and to compare the advantages of on-campus teaching to, synchronous teaching as well as to asynchronous course activities. After this workshop, the faculty members should be able to decide on the kind of course they wanted to design (using either an alternate or a thematic model), the tools they wanted to use (either synchronous or asynchronous) as well as to come up with first drafts of their courses. Jane had a vast number of activities, tools and resources from which to choose. Jane also provided faculty with a job aid containing detailed information on possible tools and resources.

This workshop also provided Jane with an opportunity to answer questions and to address issues that faculty members had about being involved in this project. At the outset of the workshop, Vivian seemed rather doubtful about getting involved whereas Alexander was extremely enthusiastic! At the end of the workshop, the two had switched roles. So it looked like the workshop had really changed a few of the participants' perceptions.

Alexander said: "*Okay, this all seems fine, but it's going to take me a lot of time to redesign my course!*" He had thought that all he had to do was to repeat his regular three-hour seminar online. He realized that things were not going to be that simple; Jane suggested he limit his virtual classes to an hour and a half in order to increase interactivity. Alexander was wondering out loud: "*How am I going to deliver all my content?"*

On the other hand, Vivian said: "*Okay, I get it; it's not so bad after all! It's even quite stimulating, seeing all the possibilities!*" Vivian seemed thrilled by the promising technology. "*I only have one question, why is it that only seasoned lecturers seem to be involved in this project, and no full-time faculty? What are faculty doing*?" Jane was thinking to herself, "Now that is a good question." But she didn't know the answer to it.

Jane was also starting to realize that the reasons seasoned lecturers or regular faculty got involved in this project were various. Some of them were really volunteers, whereas others seemed to have been required to participate.

After the workshop, Jane told the faculty that she would be available for individual follow-up and feedback.

The second workshop

Two weeks later, the second workshop took place with the same group. The goal of this workshop was more ambitious: three hours to conduct an upfront analysis of each course and determine the instructional strategies for five courses! As for the analysis phase, Jane asked faculty members to examine how they currently taught their courses, the profile of students enrolled in their courses, and limits they had observed when teaching their courses, especially with regard to the amount of time that they were able to devote to the redesign of their courses. She also focused on several institutional limits. When she got to the instructional strategy phase, she went around the room asking individual faculty and lecturers how they saw themselves converting a course from on-campus to online. Participants were very active and the discussion was rich.

A lot of questions emerged from this workshop...

"Can I modify the kind of evaluation I'm used to implementing in my course to take into account specific activities that take place during the online sessions?" Vivian asked.

"Do we have to stick with the pre-established sequencing in the alternate and thematic models?" Adrian said.

"Will the number of students enrolled in our courses be limited so that we can provide them with virtual classroom sessions?" asked Vivian.

"How am I going to get through all my content, if you tell me I have to limit the length of my virtual classrooms?" queried Ivan.

"Let's say I want to develop some multimedia tutorials for my course, how do I do that?" asked Alexander.

Since Jane was a member of the pilot project committee at the institutional level where various organizational, instructional and administrative issues were decided, she told them about the current situation. There were of course limits: the University had instituted rules that had to be applied for all courses, even blended courses. However, the current rule that had been applied over the past few years had not been considered, given the specificities of blended courses. For instance, courses that were delivered to several groups at the same time had to implement the same system of evaluation. Despite the fact that, during the workshop, discussion had focused on the need to ensure a congruent link between instructional objectives, instructional learning activities and assessment activities, it still would not be possible to create completely new online learning activities with summative assessments.

There was however some leeway if there were already points attributed to class participation in their current syllabi. In such cases, participation in virtual classroom activities could be included. With regard to the other questions raised, Jane said she would take them to the committee for clarification.

After checking with the committee, Jane met with faculty again. She told them that the committee expected them to implement both the alternate and the thematic models as established, without any exceptions. The administrators in charge would not budge on this point because they feared that, were they to do so, they would completely lose control. As for the multimedia tutorials, the faculty were free to do as they pleased. However, there was no funding set aside for the production of such; they would therefore have to produce them themselves. Jane told them that she could help with the storyboarding but that she would not have time to help them actually produce the podcasts. As for the request dealing with limiting the number of students enrolled in hybrid courses, it was rejected by the committee. So Vivian said, *"Does this mean that we may have as many as 40, maybe even 70, students in a virtual classroom?"* According to Corbett and Huggett (2009), the number of students in a virtual classroom always depends on the type of content being studied as well as the instructional objectives. If a faculty member was aiming at implementing active learning, these authors say that there should be a maximum of 10 to 15 participants in order to promote participation. If the virtual classroom was used only for delivering lectures, without any interaction from students, then there'd virtually be no limit to the number of participants possible. But this was not the kind of teaching that Vivian had in mind for her course. Moreover, in Jane's experience, and based on the recommendation of other authors such as Clark and Kwinn (2007), the secret of a successful virtual classroom was in student participation.

All of the faculty members, with one exception, opted for hybrid courses using the alternate model (on-campus class followed by an online class) rather than the thematic model (a sequence of two on-campus classes followed by three online classes). All of

them also decided to use the virtual classroom, even those who had large groups because, in most cases, complementary asynchronous activities would complete the course activities.

The technical workshop

Now the faculty members had to learn how to use the virtual classroom. Given the fact that most of them were not available for face-to-face training, Jane decided to do it online.

The first online workshop was a catastrophe! Due to numerous technical problems, Jane couldn't upload her slides and there were problems with the audio. This unfortunate experience served nonetheless to emphasize the need to be prepared. Jane naturally recognized that part of the problem here was a lack of preparation on her part, because she had been in a hurry to get this workshop underway. Also, she emphasized problem-solving strategies based on problems which could occur. At the end of the workshop, she jotted down a few notes as reminders for upcoming workshops, to help faculty be more prepared when a problem occurred.

Meta-reflection: "Yeah, yeah...I know". It seemed as though a small number of faculty found the technical training on the virtual classroom superfluous, either because they'd already used this kind of tool, or because they found it so easy to use, at first blush. In talking with Sandra, Jane realized that these were the same ones who tended to have more technical problems than the others and who tended to criticize the technology for its flaws. Paradoxically, those who were the most worried about using the technology in the beginning generally invested more time and effort in learning how to use the technology and they ended up being the more competent users. So Jane was thinking to herself "*What should I do with that particular group - the 'yeah, yeah, I know'* group?"

Faculty Support

After this series of workshops, because of summer holidays, activities started to drop off but there were a few sporadic requests for individual meetings with regard to course redesign. Jane was thinking that the workshops and the instructional guides that she'd developed had successfully prepared faculty to teach the courses online. Two weeks before classes started up again, and five weeks before the first online session, there was a feeling of excitement in the air! Vivian, Adrian and Natasha contacted Jane to prepare for their first online session.

Adrian had decided, to produce a few asynchronous tutorials for his class using the virtual classroom so that his students could view a part of his content before coming to the virtual class: "*I came to the conclusion that recording some parts of my course and watching them was an excellent way to learn how to teach in a virtual classroom. In my first tutorial, I actually found my online lecture so boring! So, I practiced and practiced again… It's not perfect, but it's ok. And now I feel confident for my first virtual classroom.*" Jane, who was used to multimedia production being a costly and long process, was surprised that Adrian, with no support, was able to produce his didactic material so quickly, especially since he had used the virtual classroom in a way that it was not originally intended.

Vivian, Adrian, Ivan and George had all practiced using the virtual classroom several times with Jane, who had used it as an opportunity to help them get used to teaching online. Jane insisted on the including interactivity in their classes in order to maintain participant interest, something that was highly unstable in an online setting; she also

emphasized the use of on-screen visuals in their presentations in order to maintain participant attention.

Tonight's the night!

They were at week three in the course calendar and tonight was the first online session for faculty members. Jane had suggested that faculty come on campus to deliver their courses so as to minimize any risk of technical problems and also to benefit from team support. Given the occasion, Sandra also was on hand to provide any help requested. It was almost like opening night at the theater! For some of the faculty, this was their baptism by fire. Their nervousness was like an electrical charge in the air. In some classes, there were more than 50 students in attendance. Jane crossed her fingers. "*Here's hoping everything goes well,*" she thought. As each faculty member or lecturer delivered their course, Sandra and Jane stood by in the resource center monitoring each class and being ready to intervene at a moment's notice. They both uttered a sigh of relief two hours later when it was all over. It had been a success! There was joy in the air.

Post-facto Feedback

After these first virtual classroom sessions, Jane and Sandra, obtained consent from faculty to review the recordings in order to analyze them. They weren't sure of a cause-effect relationship but they did notice that the faculty members who had worked with them tended to perform better than the others; they also noted that they had fewer technical problems, that there was more interaction in their virtual classes and that there was a better use of the tool.

Written feedback from Jane and Sandra was sent to each faculty member, including those who tended to work on their own. The "yeah, yeah, I know" crowd, having experienced difficulties, tended to be more receptive to suggestions this time around.

Reviewing these online sessions allowed them to identify who were the champions and what were the best practices.

Communities of practice

Given the fact that several participants in the pilot projects felt isolated while redesigning their courses, Jane organized regular workshops bringing them all together. As usual, the hardest part was finding a common time when everyone was available. Thankfully, she could count on tools like *Doodle* to help them find a common time. Workshops took place once or twice a year on campus and more frequently using the virtual classroom.

Faculty were able to discuss the kinds of course redesign they had adopted, the problems they encountered, the activities they developed, as well as various tricks of the trade learned along the way. It was an opportunity for them all to reconnect with colleagues they had met during the workshops and for the newbies to meet the veterans.

Some workshops focused on informal exchanges, others were more structured. During one meeting towards the end of the year, Jane suggested that faculty show an example of what each had done. Having found several good examples of activities developed by each of them, she proposed producing a few videos for those who didn't have time to come to the workshop. So, as a result, about a dozen good practices were presented during the meeting which became sources of inspiration for others.

A permanent site for discussions and resource sharing

Jane developed an exchange and resource website using the *Windows SharePoint* services (WSS) platform in order to support the community of practice. She added activities, a calendar, news, discussion forums, a bibliography, a list of contacts, as well as other project-related documents.

Information and promotion

Various information and promotional activities were organized during the university year: kiosks during teaching support days, brownbag teacher experience talks, etc. Material produced during these events was added online for the future training of project participants.

Years three and four

During the third year, eight new project faculty members came on board. Jane was wondering how she was going to manage the numbers, as she now had 15 faculty to assist plus all of her other projects.

The pilot project committee decided to add new personnel to help Jane. He would be a volunteer faculty member who had already redesigned his course for blended delivery and who would get a course release for his participation; his role would be that of mentor for his colleagues. As a result, project faculty could turn either to the volunteer faculty member or to Jane for support, depending on the kind of help or expertise they needed. Jane started to feel she could breathe a little easier.

As for the workshops, Jane started making a few changes. She also added some new workshops on how to be more interactive in the virtual classroom, how to improve visual communications, and how to make multimedia tutorials.

During the third year, a new learning management system (LMS) was implemented which allowed faculty members to have a completely integrated platform: course announcements, online quizzes, an assignment dropbox, and a return dropbox, discussion forums and chat room.

As for the online exchange and resources website, Jane realized that it'd slowly stopped being used. Jane felt she should try one more time to reinvigorate it, this time using the new LMS so it would be easy to access, just one click away. According to Gladwell (2006), making instructional resources more accessible can make a huge difference in uptake. Moreover, Jane structured the site based on the workshops that she had been giving as well as the new ones she was introducing. She also uploaded all of the material she used when giving the workshop in face-to-face mode.

Meta-reflection: to each his own! But there was something bugging Jane. "*Every year the same thing happens again. A small number of faculty start redesigning their courses for blended delivery months in advance, whereas others focus their efforts on doing so just a few weeks before classes begin,*" she mused. "*I guess everyone has his own style,*" thought Jane. Moreover, some faculty called on her whereas others contacted the faculty mentor, still others preferring to do their own thing and learn by themselves. Jane realized that it was an effort in futility to try and reach this last group. "*It seems to work better when I just provide them with the material online so that they can use it if and when they need it. Basically, you really have to give the people what they want.*"

Assessment

Jane sent out online questionnaires to students enrolled in courses during the first four terms of the project. Feedback indicated that they were very satisfied with the blended courses they took.

At the end of each year, Jane sent anonymous online questionnaires to faculty members to check their satisfaction levels and to get feedback from them as well as suggestions. Their suggestions were very useful in adjusting instructional strategies from one year to the next. The last question that Jane asked was, "*What would you tell a colleague who was just starting to redesign their course for hybrid delivery?*" Answers to this question were carefully recorded in her notes, which she often used such during her workshops with the following group of faculty. New faculty were thus able to use the advice of their colleagues, advice which was compiled into a kind of guidebook, "*Advice for faculty and lecturers going online.*" Finally, some faculty members emphasized the need for new faculty to meet with the instructional designer!

Jane's own assessment

Jane also sat down and assessed her own experience. She happily noted a progression in the instructional understanding that faculty had developed year after year. Lecturing, which had been the norm in most of the courses, gradually was abandoned in favor of more varied and interactive, instructional strategies. Moreover, several faculty members started putting their course content, or parts of it, online, in asynchronous format. In this manner, they were able to spend more time in the virtual classroom involved in learning activities which were both real-time and interactive. The suggestion about limiting the

length of virtual classes to 90 minutes and to making them as interactive as possible led a number of faculty to record the lecture component of their courses. Such practices that they'd been experiencing online could also influence the way on-campus, classroom teaching was occurring; class time became more precious because there was less of it. The flipped classroom concept, where the theoretical aspects of a course are viewed by students using a recorded lecture prior to coming to class, became the norm and in-class activities focused on exchanges and discussions. For most of these participants, going from on-campus to online was an opportunity for them to evolve pedagogically.

According to the TPACK model (Koehler, Mishra & Yahya, 2007), for professors to be able to use technology effectively in their classes, they must be able to evolve in a supportive environment and possess three kinds of knowledge: content knowledge, instructional knowledge, and technological knowledge. Jane realized that her role was that of a facilitator where all these three types of knowledge converged.

In the specific context of a blended project for certificate programs, this kind of convergence did take place. The program head made sure that instructional, organizational and administrative aspects came together in the project. That was probably why the work processes undertaken were effective. Moreover, project participants were mostly lecturers who had full-time jobs and would teach an occasional evening course. Jane wondered if this population would be more open to instructional advice than regular career professors.

Conclusion

Jane realized that the question was, do you adapt to your setting as it is or do you propose an approach which is slightly different? The project-based, design structure approach with a multidisciplinary team, which was the norm for single-mode distance education institutions, was not necessarily appropriate for the new dual-mode universities, given their culture. In this setting, faculty member were usually the sole designers of their courses and resources could be very limited. In such a case, what do you do? So Jane had to adapt and to move from structured design to creative support!

What advice would Jane give to an instructional designer who is just beginning to accompany faculty in a dual-mode university, within the context of blended learning with multiple limits, very few resources and almost impossible deadlines? She would propose a simplified design approach, offering tools, promoting group learning. Last but not least, she would suggest training champions, finding the most talented, the most creative faculty, documenting examples of best practices and putting them out there, and having them become a source of inspiration among other faculty and lecturers.

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