Chapter 8

Blending Traditional and Technological Factors in Teacher Education in Jamaica

Aleric Joyce Josephs
University of the West Indies - Mona Campus, West Indies

ABSTRACT

This chapter highlights the challenges and opportunities in blending traditional and technological factors in teacher education. It examines the partnership between one Caribbean state and one campus of a regional institution to develop an ODL teacher upgrading program which has become the model for a regional Bachelor of Education distance program. The aim is to use the teaching of History to make the case for using a blended approach in transitioning to ODL and for careful consideration of the use of technology in the delivery of ODL programs. It discusses how a Bachelor of Education program articulates distance learning and face-to-face modalities and examines the skills needed and the challenges involved in developing a curriculum for teaching History to distant learners using a blended approach and incorporating available technology. It suggests that readiness of faculty and learner to adopt technology as well as careful consideration of the use of technology is crucial for the success of blended learning approach in traditional teaching environment.

INTRODUCTION

The formal education system in Jamaica has traditionally developed around teacher centered forms of delivery with students attending face-to-face classes. For teachers, this meant spending 3 to 4 years in an institution, often residential and away from home and family. From time to time, the state

found it necessary to introduce programs employing open and distant learning strategies to keep the number of trained teachers in the classrooms at an appreciable rate or to upgrade their already trained and practicing teachers to meet new syllabi or new developments in the school system. In Jamaica, for example, there was a short-term measure introduced in the mid-1970s to provide training for persons employed as teachers before they were trained. The In-service Teacher Education Thrust

(ISTET) offered pre-trained teachers the chance to become trained teachers by attending classes on weekends or during the summer breaks at centers away from the teacher training colleges. In practice, ISTET was a face-to-face program though there were overlaps with elements of open and distance teaching modalities. Of this, Errol Miller concluded:

The ISTET model of teacher education mirrored the conventional face-to-face model used by colleges in all but two aspects. First, all the trainees were employed full-time as teachers and could be regarded as a type of part-time student. Second, the instruction was delivered on weekends and in school vacation periods. In it these two features overlap with the distance teaching modality in that the students were not conventional college students. **(***Miller, 2001, p.142)*

Open and distance learning strategies are now being employed to upgrade trained teachers with an undergraduate diploma to the Bachelor of Education degree level. The state entered into partnership with a regional tertiary and degree granting institution to deliver a blended program combining distance modalities with face-to-face delivery with courses in the methodology of teaching as well as courses designed to improve and expand subject content for the teachers. A significance of this program rests in the fact that it was a short-term project, designed for a particular client, a national Ministry of Education, but worked as a pilot for an expanded distance regional education program offered by the training institution. It offers the opportunity to examine some key factors in using distance education to expand opportunities for study at the tertiary level in small states and at transnational scale.

SETTING THE STAGE

This chapter examines the partnership between one Caribbean state and one campus of a regional institution to develop an ODL teacher upgrading program which has become the model for a regional Bachelor of Education distance program. The aim is to use the teaching of History to make the case for using a blended approach in transitioning to ODL and for careful consideration of the use of technology in the delivery of ODL programs. It discusses how a Bachelor of Education program articulates distance learning and face-to-face modalities and examines the skills needed and the challenges involved in developing a curriculum for teaching History to distant learners using a blended approach and incorporating available technology. The responses of students to online instruction and assessment as against face-to-face sessions are explored using anecdotal and other qualitative material.

The study reveals that there are both challenges and opportunities in using ODL in in-service teacher education, and in engrafting distance programs on an established face-to-face institution. A major challenge is the adoption of online instruction in a country where internet connectivity is not pervasive or affordable even for the educated middle class professionals.

Literature Review

There is a preponderance of literature on open and distance education (ODL). Invariably the discourse focuses on one or more of the many issues related to broadening access to higher education. What is clear from the ongoing discussion is that ODL is not a solution for all that is ill with the traditional mode of education delivery, even while it offers flexible options to teaching and learning. The literature emphasizes that technology is not a panacea for all that is problematic in open and distance learning, but it is value added. (Spaeth & Cameron, 2000, p.325). The theoretical per-

19 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/blending-traditional-technological-factors-teacher/42340

Related Content

Online Signature Recognition
Indrani Chakravarty (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1456-1462).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/online-signature-recognition/11012

Scientific Web Intelligence
Mike Thelwall (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1714-1719).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/scientific-web-intelligence/11049

Multiclass Molecular Classification
Chia Huey Ooi (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1352-1357).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/multiclass-molecular-classification/10997

Visualization Techniques for Confidence Based Data
Andrew Hamilton-Wrightand Daniel W. Stashuk (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 2068-2073).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/visualization-techniques-confidence-based-data/11104

Mass Informatics in Differential Proteomics
Xiang Zhang, Seza Orcun, Mourad Ouzzaniand Cheolhwan Oh (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1176-1181).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/mass-informatics-differential-proteomics/10971