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## ONLINE TEACHING: SAME TEACHER, DIFFERENT TOOLS

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**Abstract:** *THE PAST FIVE YEARS HAVE SEEN A SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN THE SHIFT TO ONLINE EDUCATION FOR REASONS SUCH AS EASIER ACCESS AND GENERAL FLEXIBILITY AND THIS YEAR FOR REASON OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC. MANY TEACHERS HAD TO SHIFT FROM CLASSROOM TEACHING TO ONLINE TEACHING THAT MAKE THEM WORK HARDER TO EMULATE THE SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE AND GROUP DYNAMIC CHARACTERISTIC OF THE FACE-TO-FACE COURSE AND USE NEW TOOLS AND PEDAGOGIES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS FROM DISTANCE.*

*THE FIRST PART OF THIS ARTICLE WILL PRESENT THE HISTORY OF ONLINE TEACHING AND GIVE A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE TYPES OF ONLINE TEACHING. THE SECOND PART WILL FOCUS ON TOOLS AND METHODS THAT SHAPE THE WAY WE TEACH FOR THE DIGITAL GENERATION, GENERATION Z (NEIL HOVE AND WILLIAM STRAUSS), SOCIAL-DIGITAL GENERATION (K. LONKA AND L. HIETAJÄRVI, GENERATION ALPHA OR WI-FI GENERATION AND ON SOME TIPS WHICH HELP TO MAKE ONLINE TEACHING MORE ENGAGING. WE WILL GIVE AN OVERVIEW OF THE TOOLS AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS THAT ARE MOST WIDESPREAD TO TRANSFER THE TEACHING SKILLS FROM THE FACE-TO-FACE CLASSROOM TO A DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT.*

**Keywords:** *ONLINE TEACHING, DIGITAL GENERATION, NEW TEACHING TOOLS, HYBRID LEARNING, BLENDED LEARNING*

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### INTRODUCTION

The past five years have seen a significant growth in the shift to online education for reasons such as easier access and general flexibility and this year for reason of Covid-19 pandemic.

Many teachers had to shift from classroom teaching to online teaching that make them work harder to emulate the social atmosphere and group dynamic characteristic of the face-to-face course and use new tools and pedagogies to support students from distance.

The traditional methods such as lectures, explanations, exercises and rote learning, used in the university educational process, have their limitations nowadays when online education continues to



grow in popularity and accessibility and the digital technologies penetrated into learning in an internetized society.

Institutions of higher education have found that online programs are essential in providing access to education and have taken into consideration that the curriculum, the teacher, the technology and the students must be carefully considered and balanced.

Online programs have nowadays become popular in higher education due to dynamic interaction between the teacher and students, students' participation in classes from anywhere in the world provided they have a computer and Internet connection, their access to resources and materials that may be physically located anywhere in the world, equal opportunity amongst students and teachers with a disability, opportunities to access and share information more easily and readily, teaching and learning occurring at times that are more convenient and productive for both students and teachers.

The online environment offers opportunities for people who would otherwise have limited access to education, as well as dynamic courses of high quality. Higher education will be different by 2021 and will adopt teleconferencing, distance learning and the transition to blended classes.

### **WHAT IS ONLINE TEACHING?**

Online teaching and learning is education that takes place over the Internet and it is often referred to as e-learning, distance education or distance learning among other terms. Online education is electronically supported learning that relies on the Internet.

**Cambridge dictionary** defines e-learning as: learning done by studying at home using computers and courses provided on the internet.

**Oxford dictionary** defines e-learning as: a system of learning that uses electronic media, typically over the internet and distance learning as: a system of education in which people study at home with the help of special internet sites and send or email work to their teachers.

**Encyclopedia** defines online education as a flexible instructional delivery system that encompasses any kind of learning that takes place via the Internet.

Bartley and Golek, (2004) consider that online learning is a form of distance learning or distance education, which has long been a part of the American education system, and it has become the largest sector of distance learning in recent years. Both hybrid and blended learning which combines traditional face-to-face and other technologies, and purely online learning, are considered to be online learning as much of the literature compares these two formats.

### **The history of online schooling**

Curran (1997) states that the concept of distance learning first came into practice in the mid-19th century when the U.S. Postal Service was developed and commercial 'correspondence colleges' were implemented and students and professors were sending their material through the postal service. In 1840, Sir Isaac Pitman, the English inventor of shorthand, came up with an ingenious idea and started correspondence courses by mail. Within a few decades extensive programs were available in the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States and Japan. In 1858, the University of London became the first college to offer distance learning degrees. The first official correspondence education program was established in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1873 and in 1888, in Pennsylvania, the International Correspondence Schools were providing training for immigrant coal miners aiming to become state mine inspectors or foremen. In 1911, the University of Queensland in Australia founded its Department of Correspondence Studies and in 1946, The University of South Africa became a champion and innovator of distance learning.

The founding of United Kingdom's Open University in 1969 marked a significant development of the second phase of distance learning, the university sending learning materials to students by mail.

Teaching materials included texts, audio and video resources and were supplemented with conventional broadcast radio and television and there was a tutor for each student who tutored over the telephone and in group sessions. 4 open universities were established in Europe, and more than 20 were established in countries around the world.

According to Currant (1997), in the United States, by the mid-1980s, more than 300,000 students were enrolled in university-taught distance education courses and in Canada, some 19 conventional universities were active in distance teaching. In the Soviet Union, where distance teaching was adopted in the late 1920s, all 61 universities eventually offered education by correspondence, and it is reported in the former German Democratic Republic that approximately one quarter of the university and technical college graduates attained their qualification by means of distance education. It is clear that distance education had developed into a substantive sector of higher education in quite a few countries.

### Types of online teaching

**Synchronous online courses** require the professor and all enrolled students to interact online simultaneously through video conferencing, teleconferencing, live chatting and live-streaming lectures. The advantages of synchronous learning are the active discussion and the immediate feedback. The personal contact got through live videoconferencing can make easier the transition from face-to-face learning to online learning. Videoconferencing makes possible the interaction with the professor and classmates and the individual guidance. The disadvantages are the rigid schedule, because lectures and class discussion will take place at established time, and the technical difficulties. If students are at work, they are forced to complete coursework in a coffee shop, office, airport etc. This can be stressful if the student is having an exam and is searching for wireless signal or internet connection.

**Asynchronous online courses** do not take place in real time and teacher-student interaction is done through discussion, boards, blogs, emails, chats. Students are provided with syllabi and assignments and are given a time frame to complete their work and exams. Materials might include text-based lecture notes, pre-recorded lectures and podcasts, virtual libraries etc. The advantages of asynchronous online courses are the access to resources and materials from all over the world, the participation in classes from anywhere in the world, provided they have a computer and Internet connection, the anonymity, flexible schedule, self-guidance and affordability. The disadvantages are the isolation because the opportunities to interface, debate and network are insufficient and the demotivation.

**Blended learning** is a combination of face-to-face and online lessons. For example students can have face-to-face courses, then go home and do their homework sent as videos or podcasts, take an online course and receive face-to-face tutoring between online classes.

**Oxford dictionary** defines blended learning as a way of studying a subject that combines being taught in class with the use of different technologies, including learning over the internet.

**Cambridge dictionary** defines it as a way of learning that combines traditional classroom lessons with lessons that use computer technology and may be given over the internet.

It is proven that blended learning gives learners a more comprehensive understanding of the course content, offers them the ability to control their learning pace and improves their responsibility for learning. If blended learning means the combination between offline and online learning, hybrid learning focuses on finding the right mix of possibilities, the best experience for students.

The existence of blended learning requires a re-evaluation both of technology's place in and out of the classroom and the teaching methods. Being a mix of physical and digital learning, an example of blended learning could be working in a group in the classroom, and then going home to analyze that



work and turn in a video as an assessment form or taking a course online, then receiving face-to-face tutoring between online lessons. Teachers must be committed to and well trained in blended and hybrid education and its technologies, and students must have a clear understanding of what is expected of them in this new environment.

Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) identified six reasons why one might chose to design or use a blended learning system: (1) pedagogical richness, (2) access to knowledge, (3) social interaction, (4) personal agency, (5) cost effectiveness, and (6) ease of revision.

**Hybrid learning** combines face-to-face and online teaching but roughly balanced between its two formats (think 50/50) and in a way to give the best to the students.

Hybrid learning and blended learning require a re-evaluation of technology and teaching methods in order to suit the varying learning styles of students. During the pandemic, a combination of the university platform where teachers could share materials, recordings, syllabus and the Zoom app seemed to be the best blended learning for our students.

In the following part of this article, we will focus on the way we plan and deliver the online course; will give practical ideas and suggestions for tools, resources and activities.

### **RETHINKING 21ST CENTURY TOOLS AND METHODS FOR TEACHING ONLINE**

It is not enough to simply add technology to existing teaching methods in this shift towards 21<sup>st</sup> century learning requirements, but to serve as a guide or mentor for students that sometimes know more about technology than teachers having so much access to resources. We talk about Generation Z that have had technology like smartphones, iPads, smartboards and Generation Alpha younger than smartphones, the iPad, 3D television, Instagram, and music streaming apps.

There have been identified 4 skills for today pedagogy: creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration. This shift towards 21<sup>st</sup> century learning requires schools and universities to keep pace with changes and take account of the new meaning of teaching. When we start teaching online, the first important step is to think about who our students might be. Will they be younger learners, or adults? We will also have to bear in mind that there will be all sorts of students with all sorts of English levels and studying in home environments not face-to-face means that we have to establish a safe environment, to collaborate, discuss, reflect and feedback in. Planning is essential for online teaching because virtual students are different so all we need is to have the syllabus and materials laid out clearly before class starts.

#### **What equipment do you need?**

When teaching online all you need is a laptop or a computer with a camera, a headset with microphone, stable internet connection, a platform for teaching live and a whiteboard if the platform does not have it. After getting to know who our students are, the next step is to explore the platform and get familiar with the features that a platform might offer: chat box, share screen, tick icon, interactive whiteboard and breakout rooms which allow splitting participants in separate sessions. A teacher will need to be able to answer technical questions and general internet questions, as well as course-related queries.

#### **What materials and activities for online lessons?**

A lot of re-writing will be needed for implementing the face-to-face courses in online format. Course books can be used only after being adapted; the internet is a good place for finding teaching materials too. Some tips will be to use very simple handouts, give simple tasks, give students to read activities before and then debate online. A nice warmer activity is to choose a picture that introduces the topic of the day and activates students' prior knowledge.

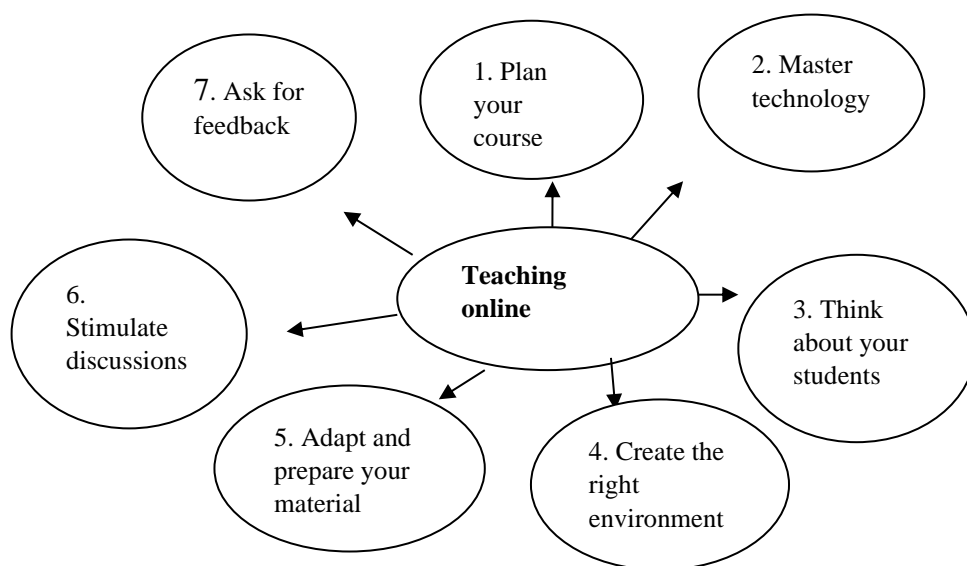
For the listening activities videos and podcasts can be used because they cover any topic and the majority is free. When using a podcast we can use the following activities recommended by The British Council:

- Read the short summary of the podcast and predict three things you think the presenters will talk about.
- Play two minutes of the podcast. Stop and predict what you will hear next. Continue listening. Were you correct?
- Listen to the whole podcast without stopping. Write a short summary of what you heard, or record an audio summary of it. Listen again and see if you can add any extra information. Repetition will improve your confidence.
- Choose a piece of grammar you'd like to improve, like the present perfect. Focus on listening for it. How many times did you hear it? What contexts is it used in?
- Listen and repeat what a speaker is saying. Mumble it under your breath. Repeating this a few times can really help your pronunciation.
- Choose ten words, phrases or collocations you think the presenters will use and use them in a story.

It is very important to create the right environment, to spend time on socialization and group dynamic, to set a few simple rules, to establish terms, to set clear objectives, to check if students understood chatting with them after a lesson. Each course will flag up problems, issues but there is a potential for improvement by incorporating participants' feedback into future courses versions.

Some **digital learning management systems** to be used are: Moodle (a free open source software for creating online courses), Google classroom (assignments, communication etc.), Blackboard (offers solutions and resources), Edmodo (a tool to send messages, share materials), Cell-Ed (adult learners), LabXchange (online community) and Quizlet (application that allows learning and teaching through tools and games).

**The communication tools** that can be used online are: **Zoom** (a tool enabling video communications, video and audio conferencing, chats and webinars), **Skype** (a free tool for making videos and one-to-one and group calls), **Microsoft Teams** (a platform that combines workplace chat, video meetings, and file storage), **Google Meet** (enables text, voice, or video chats, either one-to-one or in a group) and **Digital talk** (an audio and video conferencing system).



**Figure 1:** 7 important steps for teaching online



The above figure shows the 7 important steps which are suggested to be taken into account when teaching online and that can be changed or improved because there really is not one set way to do it.

## CONCLUSION

Considering that the online revolution is here, we brought into discussion the history of online teaching, gave a short description of the types of online teaching and presented some tools and methods that shape the way we teach for the digital generation.

Institutions of higher education cannot ignore the new disruptive online education phenomena and have to be aware that online programs are essential in providing access to education and that the curriculum, the teacher, the technology and the students must be carefully considered in order to have a successful an online program.

This paper considered the effectiveness of online teaching and learning in an appropriate environment and using the right technology.

Bonvillian, and Singer (2013) think that “this human-online symbiosis —the right blends of students, teachers, and teams with online capabilities—will catalyze a new generation of science learning”.





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