

**Change Initiative or Learning Initiative?
A Case Study of a Pilot Project of Hybrid Online Courses**

Wendy Keller

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ABSTRACT

Change Initiative or Learning Initiative? A Case Study of a Pilot Project of Hybrid Online Courses

Wendy Keller

It is believed that online distance education is the fastest growing segment of adult education today. The number of students registering in at least one online course has increased at a higher percentage than the growth in total student enrollment each year. Even institutions that have built their credentials on the traditional face-to-face lecture method are offering courses online. However, one has to be cautious not to view the “information edu-highway” as a universal strategy to address all the challenges faced by post-secondary institutions. On the other hand, the suspicion that online distance education is merely a vehicle to financial gains is also limiting. Administrators need to understand the implications of incorporating online models for their faculty, students and existing infrastructure in order to determine if this strategy can help to achieve their educational and financial goals.

This qualitative research effort provides insights to the experiences of participants in a pilot project for hybrid online courses in an attempt to answer the question “What factors need to be considered by administrators and their faculty when trying to determine if and to what extent online distance education ‘fits’ their institution?”

The observations support the existing literature on important considerations for the successful implementation of e-learning initiatives. However the more significant finding involves the navigation and management of a change process by the members of the institution themselves and their organization. This Case Study is a snapshot of that challenge.

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List of Acronyms

AACSB.....	Association for the Advancement of Collegiate Studies in Business
AFT.....	American Federation of Teachers
ALA.....	American Library Association
CCNE.....	Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education
CEGEP.....	Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel
	Translation - College of General and Vocational Education
CFC.....	Capacity for Change
CSLP.....	Center for the Study of Learning and Performance
CMEC.....	Council of Ministers of Canada
DCS.....	Diploma of Collegial Studies
DEC.....	Diplôme d'Études Collégiales
DMCA.....	Digital Millennium Copyright Act
GEC.....	General Education Course
IP.....	Intellectual Property
LITC.....	Library and Information Technology Center
MELS.....	Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport
	Translation – Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports
MERLOT.....	Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online
	Teaching
MEQ.....	Ministère de L'Éducation du Québec
MFI.....	Motivation for Innovation

NASULGC.....National Association of State Universities and Land Grant
Colleges

NCES.....National Center for Education Statistics

NEA.....National Education Association

NLNAC.....National League for Nursing Accreditation Commission

NPEC.....National Postsecondary Education Cooperative

NSSE.....National Survey of Student Engagement

PER.....Perception of Online Distance Education

PODE.....Participation in Online Distance Education

R1Round 1 Student Survey

R2Round 2 Student Survey

R3Round 3 Student Survey

STI.....Strategy towards Innovation

TEACH.....Technology, Education and Copyright Harmonization

TIQ.....Technology Implementation Questionnaire

WIPO.....World Intellectual Property Organization

VHP.....Vanier Hybrid Online Pilot Project

Overview

Despite the increased promotion of online distance education at the post-secondary level, conclusions of studies focusing on e-learning initiatives over the past two decades can best be described as mixed (Abrami, P.C., Bernard, R.M et al, 2006).

To better understand the process involved when members of an academic institution venture into the realm of online instruction for the first time, this researcher spent approximately eight months (from October 2005, to May 2006) intermittently observing, interacting and documenting the “experience” of faculty and their administrator(s) during the first year of a pilot project for hybrid online courses at Vanier College, an English language CEGEP (Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel - College of General and Vocational Education) in St. Laurent, Québec, Canada.

The “story” of a small team of individuals that acted as pioneers of innovation underscores some significant “watch outs” in the design, development and delivery of online courses. Set against the backdrop of organizational challenges inherent in any change initiative, it offers a lexicon of practice for the institution in the study as well as a point of reference for the field of e-learning in general and in particular hybrid online distance education. Through the evolution of the project, it becomes evident that navigating this educational change process is more intricate and complex than originally anticipated.

This research report is divided into four chapters with a separate section for references and appendices.

Chapter 1 is the Introduction and defines the purpose of the research. It sets the stage with a basic review of the literature on the potential implications for post-secondary

academic institutions (their administrators, faculty and students) considering incorporating online distance education courses (hybrid or otherwise) into the curriculum. I take a “big picture” approach outlining the broader changes necessary for any online distance education initiative to be successful. The “smaller picture” or more specific perspective surfaces in the discussion of the actual hybrid online pilot project experience described in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2 explains the rationale for using the case study approach and why it is the natural qualitative research method of choice to explore this topic and communicate the findings. The unit of analysis is defined and why the particular site and participants were selected and how access was obtained. This is followed by a summary of the procedure used to collect and code data including a description of my role of participant observer, the types of interviews conducted and the basis for the faculty and student questionnaires used to triangulate the data. The chapter is concluded with an explanation of the review and analysis process and an example of the data base format used to capture aspects and issues of the case.

Chapter 3 begins with a brief introduction for the setting of the Case. This information provides context and helps to explain some of the external factors contributing to the initiation of the hybrid online pilot project.

Next the findings and observations of the research are discussed under the general headings of Strategy for Change, Motivation to Participate in Online Distance Education, Perception, Participation and Capacity for Change. The experiences of the pilot project administrators and participating faculty members are shared highlighting consistencies with the existing literature as well as the implications for the management of educational

change at the college. Faculty outline “lessons learned” and recommendations for continued implementation of the hybrid online pilot project effort.

Chapter 4 presents additional considerations regarding the implementation of online initiatives. And in combination with Chapter 3 provide insights to answers for the question “What factors need to be considered by administrators and their faculty when trying to determine if and to what extent online distance education ‘fits’ their institution?” Opportunities for further studies are also identified.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Distance education evolved as an innovative solution to a problem. It was developed

“to create and widen access to education and to improve its quality, using distance education techniques and associated technologies to meet the particular requirements of individuals who were unable to participate in the traditional classroom environment.” (Hillstock, 2005. p.139).

Initially distance education involved correspondence schools that used the postal system to maintain written communication. Relative to today’s standards, the process was slow and tedious, but it was successful in reaching students who because of time or geographic limitations could not physically attend classes at an academic institution (Berg, 2002). The availability of television and other media increased the options for the exchange of information. And the introduction of the World Wide Web and the Internet, presented an even faster, more efficient mechanism for the transmission of data and broadened access to information for anyone who went “online”.

For each of these innovations, questions about the quality and effectiveness of the associated teaching and learning processes that differ markedly from the ones practiced before, repeatedly surface. This can only be expected. Why should this “high tech” form of knowledge communication be immune to any of the challenges and soul searching that has been going on for centuries relative to what makes good education?

Today distance education, either in a hybrid or 100% online format, is often applied as the innovative¹ solution to many of the challenges encountered with the face-to-face in-class educational models (AFT, 2003; Allen & Seaman, 2007; NASULGC 2007) and

¹ Innovation defined as “an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption. It matters little... whether an idea is objectively new as measured by the lapse of time since its first use or discovery...If an idea seems new to the individual it is an innovation”. (Rogers, 1995, p.11)

as a way for academic institutions to compete for limited resources (Abrami, Bernard et al, 2006). Travel time and expense, schedules and classroom size can be very flexible in online distance education environments and is perceived as an advantage by students (Berg, 2002; Tamashiro, 2003; Howell, Williams & Lindsay, 2003; Hannay & Newvine, 2006). In *Online Learning as a Strategic Asset*, the 2007 NASULGC study of 215 university presidents and chancellors, 71% rated increasing student access as an important component of their online strategy. In addition to responding to student needs for access and flexibility, online distance education is also seen as a strategic equalizer for the academic institution offering the programs/courses (Rogers, 2000; Howell, Williams & Lindsay, 2003). Post-secondary colleges and universities do not only compete amongst themselves to increase and maintain student enrolment levels, attract reputable faculty and secure funding. The “educational entrepreneur” promoting degrees earned quickly online and/or skills learned easily via “shrink wrap” courseware is also a contender (Denning, 1996; Frank 2000; Oblinger & Kidwell, 2000; Shale 2002; AFT, 2003; Pirani & Silaway 2005).

Statement of the Research Problem and Purpose of the Study

Although studies demonstrate that online education has made significant inroads in the core offerings at most types of academic institutions (Allen & Seaman, 2005; Allen & Seaman, 2006; Allen & Seaman, 2007; NASULGC 2007), the question of what value online distance education really brings, continues to raise controversy (Tamashiro, 2003; Abrami, Bernard et al, 2006). Understanding the real meaning and impact of an online initiative for an institution is key to determining whether there is a strategic fit for the

innovation in the first place and increasing the likelihood of its sustainability in the long run (Fullan, 2001; Haddad, 2002; Owston, 2003).

The original purpose of this research effort was to observe and document the experience, perceptions and attitudes of a small group of faculty members of Vanier College, an English language CEGEP (Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel - College of General and Vocational Education) in St. Laurent, Québec, Canada, who agreed to participate in a pilot project of hybrid online distance education courses. The intent was to illuminate the hands-on challenges and needs for successful implementation of curriculum traditionally taught in a face-to-face environment to one that would be delivered predominantly (70%) online in order to answer the question “What factors need to be considered by administrators and their faculty when trying to determine if and to what extent online distance education ‘fits’ their institution?”

As the research evolved it became evident that the mechanics of instructional design and the choices regarding technology were not the only factors to be studied. Although findings about the practical “hands-on” challenges are useful particularly when creating a list of “watch out’s” for anyone interested in exploring online education, the over-riding issue which can make or break the successful adoption of this type of innovation is an organizations’ capacity for change. The experiences of the participating faculty and their administrators, underscores that the incorporation of hybrid online distance education courses or programs constitutes much more than instructional re-design of individual courses and the availability of technology. It involves the capacity for change within an organization; challenging the beliefs and values of its members and

the framework of policies and practices (Rogers, 1995; Errington, 2001; Pajo & Wallace, 2001).

John Dewey (1966) felt that by understanding individual history and past experiences we contribute to future experiences. He said that “the educational process is one of continual re-organizing, reconstructing, transforming experience” (p.50). Insights to the experiences of the Vanier College faculty and their administrators as they explore designing and teaching courses using a hybrid online model for the first time can contribute to the information used to make “educational judgments in order to improve educational action” (Bassey, 1999, p.39). Not only will the institution in the study build a knowledge basis with which to make future decisions about e-learning but the lessons learned can benefit other post-secondary institutions (especially colleges) considering similar strategies.

Literature Review

Although distance education has been available in different forms for over 150 years (first through correspondence then radio, television, video and audio instruction – Berg, 2002) today’s computer technology, the internet and the World Wide Web have substantially increased the number of educational resources and along with them, the opportunities for distance learning.

Definition:

Online distance education differs from face-to-face in class education in that it unites teachers and students, who due to their location, time constraints, and/or social responsibilities can not meet in a traditional on-campus classroom. Computers are used to

mediate the educational process and facilitate communication between teachers and students.

Table 1-1 shows the different modes of education delivery referred to in this report. The definitions are taken from *Growing By Degrees: Online Education in the United States*, a Sloan Consortium Report, (Allen & Seaman, 2005). Although the report describes trends in the USA, the definitions for modes of delivery can be applied globally.

Table 1-1 Modes of Education Delivery

Type of Course	Description	Percentage of Online Delivery
Traditional	Course delivered in a face-to-face, in-class environment. Content is delivered in a written or oral format using slides or chalk or marker boards, flip charts, etc. In-class videos, audios can be used to support material to be learned.	0
Web-Facilitated	Course uses web-based technology to facilitate what is otherwise a face-to-face course. Course management systems or web-pages may be used to post the syllabus, assignments, readings, etc. Email is sometimes used as an adjunct to regular office hours.	1-29
Blended/Hybrid	Course that blends online and face-to-face delivery. Substantial proportion of the content is delivered online, using web-pages or course management systems to lead the course. A mix of online discussions and some face-to-face interaction is used to support the learning process. Emails are typically used instead of office hours.	30-79
Online Distance Education	Most or all of the content is delivered online. Typically there are no face-to-face meetings. Same tools for computer mediated interaction as for Blended/Hybrid Education (listed above) are used.	80-100

Growth in Popularity

Local, national and international reports tell us that the popularity for online learning is increasing each year in post-secondary education (NEA, 2000; AFT, 2001; UNESCO 2002; Srivastava, 2002; NPEC, 2004; Allen & Seaman, 2005; Allen & Seaman 2006; NSSE, 2006; NASULGC 2007). Shortly after the new millennium surveys in both the USA and Canada showed over 50% of public two year institutions offered some form of distance learning courses and (NCES, 2003; CMEC, 2002) and the demand for flexible learning environments continues to increase (Allen & Seaman 2006; NSSE, 2006; NASULGC 2007)

Many post-secondary academic institutions have “taken up the challenge” of incorporating technology to not only support teaching and learning in the traditional classroom, but as a mode of education delivery that meets students’ demands for flexibility either in a hybrid or 100% online format (Oblinger & Hawkins, 2005; Allen & Seaman, 2007; NASULGC, 2007). For those institutions where offering 100% online courses and/or programs is not possible, the blended or hybrid approach combining the sophistication of technology with personal face to-face interaction in a 50/50 or 25/75 split, seems to satisfy the needs of both faculty and students (AFT, 2003, McGraw-Hill 2006; NSSE, 2006).

Growing by Degrees, a study funded by the Sloan Consortium² comparing registration in online courses since 2001, shows that the “number of students who study

² Sloan-C maintains a catalog of degree and certificate programs offered by a wide range of regionally accredited member institutions, consortia and industry partners. It provides speakers to help institutions learn about online methodologies; hosts conferences and workshops to help implement and improve online programs; publishes the Sloan-C View, the Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks (JALN), and conducts research, annual surveys on online learning and forums to inform academic, government and private sector audiences. Taken directly from Source: <http://www.sloan-c.org/aboutus/>

online has been increasing at a rate far in excess of the rate of growth in the overall higher education student population” (Allen & Seaman, 2005, p.5) with the two-year associates’ institutions accounting for the highest growth rates capturing over 50% of the online enrolments. Subsequent studies by the same authors entitled *Making the Grade* (2006) and *Online Nation: Five years of growth in online learning* (2007) also revealed that the number of institutions who identified online distance education as an important component of their long term strategy grew from 49% in 2003 to 56% in 2005. At the top of this trend were community, junior or technical colleges where the rating of importance increased from 58% in 2003, to 72% in 2005.

It should be noted that the smaller, private, non-profit institutions and colleges offering Baccalaureate degrees “remain the least likely to agree that online education is part of their long-term strategy” although they do offer online courses (Allen & Seaman, 2005, p.2). However, amongst the mid-size schools, 80% offer undergraduate courses online and 70% offer graduate courses online. And the numbers are more impressive for the larger schools (Allen & Seaman, 2005).

It cannot be denied that the data shows growth of participation in online distance education (Allen & Seaman, 2007). However, an institution has to be careful not to simply get caught up in the momentum and envision the “information edu-highway” as a “one-size fits all” solution to address their challenges (Oblinger & Kidwell, 2000). Nor should the decision to reject online distance education be taken without examining the merits this mode of education delivery has to offer the members of an institution.

As the available technology continues to evolve, it comprises very exciting attributes and presents opportunities and challenges that are quite different when used other than to

support the traditional in class lectures with word processing software or email communications (Brown & Voltz, 2005). This fuels the divide between optimism and caution towards online or computer mediated distance education. Consequently it becomes increasingly difficult to evaluating whether there is a fit of this model of delivery for an institution and how to go about optimizing its application.

Change in Education Delivery

“Learning to live with change has almost become a pre-requisite for participating in the education system” (Oliver, 1996, p.1) and the “capacity to adapt and change as new modes of knowledge formation emerge” (Frost & Chopp, 2004, p. 46) is vital to the continued development of any academic institution. Fullan (2001) tells us that “mastery of the change process” (p. 8) must be a priority for those interested in adopting innovation, otherwise the change initiative will only add to the problem(s) it is intended to solve.

The adoption of any change initiative in education involves understanding the theoretical and practical aspects of the change process. By theoretical aspects I am referring to the process of conceptually exploring the “why” and “how” of an innovation; conducting a value analysis and reviewing implications for the parties and organization involved, and then taking the decision as to whether to initiate or test the innovation. This is the first of three broad phases of the change process as described by Michael Fullan in his 2001 edition of *The New Meaning of Educational Change*.

By practical aspects I am referring to the mechanics of the change process or the “hands-on” actions taken during the early stages of implementing an initiative (i.e. first

few years). This coincides with the second phase of change as described by Fullan (2001).

Continuity or “institutionalization” is Fullan’s third phase of change. Once tested and evaluated, the innovation is either incorporated as part of the existing educational processes or left to dissolve. It depends largely on whether “critical mass” (Robinson, 2001) or the number of resources (e.g., the CEGEP faculty and administrators, library and technology staff) who choose to adopt the innovation based on their beliefs and perceptions of its value (Rogers, 1995; Errington, 2001; Pajo & Wallace, 2001) and the support (e.g. leadership, training, technology, career opportunity, etc.) that is available to reinforce this choice (Robinson, 2001; McLachlan-Smith & Gunn, 2001; Pajo & Wallace, 2001; Fullan, 2007).

It is important to remember that change is not measured by a single major event nor should it be expected to be realized in a linear fashion (Fullan, 2001; Robinson, 2001). Change transcends over time and different aspects or stages progress at different rates. Members of an institution will justifiably question or challenge initiatives that require a shift in status quo. And many times a decision, experience or outcome in one phase (i.e., initiation, implementation and continuation) results in the need to revisit a previous phase (Fullan, 2001; Owston, 2003) ideally resulting in an improved model. “Thus, innovation is a layered process where the effect of previous decisions, institutional context and personal histories shape what comes next” (Peruski, 2003, p.5) and affects longer term adoption (Fullan, 2001).

Typically the early stages of implementation of an innovation are manageable because of the small scale and use of few resources and contingencies. Since the time

involved is usually fixed (e.g. 2-3 year time frame), the implicated parties make exceptions and “bend the rules” and create temporary processes to make it work (Robinson, 2001). However, once the scope of the innovation needs to be enlarged it will require a greater commitment of resources (e.g., department-wide plan to incorporate hybrid online courses). An institution needs to determine if it has sufficient capacity to scale up the initiative and support its continuation (Fullan, 2001; Fullan, 2007). For example, depending on the given infrastructure and skill level of faculty, an e-learning initiative such as the implementation of courses that are delivered in a hybrid online format, requires support and training for online design and instructional techniques, assistance with the type and use of technology, access to on-going troubleshooting assistance, and possible release time for planning and development, etc., (McLachlan-Smith & Gunn, 2001; Robinson, 2001; Haddad, 2002; Owston, 2003; Seel & Dijkstra, 2004; Moore, Moore & Fowler, 2005). There will also be students who need orientation and mentoring in order to become proficient in online learning strategies and who will require technical training and ongoing access to “help desk” assistance (Harasim, Hiltz et al, 1995; McLachlan-Smith & Gunn, 2001; Robinson, 2001; Palloff & Pratt, 2001). The administration will need to define policies and protocols for intellectual property and knowledge management (Palloff & Pratt, 2001; Raman, 2004). Decisions will need to be made about the capabilities of existing technology and the type of personnel to be hired to support the initiative (Robinson, 2001; Haddad, 2002). And certainly the effectiveness of the existing compensation and reward system to encourage continuation will need to be examined (Owston, 2003). Through each stage (initiation, implementation and continuation) decisions must be taken about the required resources and structure to take

the innovation from the “twinkle in the eye” to a fully “institutionalized” form that “fits” the organization (Fullan, 2007).

The more an innovation requires a change in the basic or core practices of teaching and learning, the more difficult the adoption by the individual or institution (Owston, 2003).

“It isn’t that people resist change as much as they don’t know how to cope with it. If we know one thing about innovation (and reform), it is that it cannot be done successfully to others.”
(Fullan, 1991, p. xiv)

The process required is much more than just purchasing equipment and software and training faculty on its use. A “re-culturing” needs to occur, referring to changes in the institution’s culture and value system regarding an innovation (Fullan, 2001). This “re-culturing” comes about through changes in the core beliefs of a critical mass (e.g., individuals or groups) of members of the institution and is sustained through a supporting infrastructure and participative leaders (Fullan, 2001; Rogers, 1995).

In addition to critical mass, the continued presence of “champions” - pioneering individuals who tend to take high risks to advocate change – helps to sustain the innovation (Rogers, 1995). Champions promote innovation to others to ensure continued interest to develop the idea. And in combination with a strong coordinating leader and sufficient capacity (e.g., resources that can be dedicated to support the effort, usable technology, etc.) help to facilitate the adoption of the innovation on a larger scale (Rogers, 1995; Robinson, 2001; Owston, 2003; Fullan, 2007).

Online Distance Education – What does it mean for the institution?

Understanding the intricacies of the changes involved and the potential outcomes of adopting an online distance education initiative is important to answering the question of whether the change will in fact address the problems or issues that triggered the idea or innovation in the first place. Online distance education models should not be oversimplified as just a different way to deliver course content where only the tools of mediation (e.g. technology, texts, access to library resources) need to be readjusted. Conversely building it up to be an insurmountable undertaking involving overwhelming resources and investment eliminates the possibility of extracting its potential value.

In order to better understand the value and meaning of change resulting from the incorporation of online courses in general, it is helpful to review the expectations, perceptions and needs of those groups who will experience the change (Bates, 2000; Berg, 2002). The following pages comprise issues that research has identified as important considerations for administrators, faculty members and students that will affect their perception of value of online learning environments.

Issues for Administrators

The review of the literature (Anakwe & Kessler, 1999; Frank, 2000; Bower, 2001; Pajo & Wallace, 2001; Palloff & Pratt, 2001; AFT, 2003; Porter, 2004; Abrami, Bernard et al., 2006; Palloff & Pratt, 2007) shows that online distance education is often considered a potential solution for many of the challenges that administrators face in managing and leading an academic institution. However pressure to be innovative because others are doing so and attempting to address problems by offering courses

online without understanding the implications of the changes involved can deplete already limited resources, hinder the sustainability of the initiative and impact the credibility of the institution in the long run.

Financial Considerations.

One of the top challenges faced by post-secondary institutions is access to funding and financial resources. Although online courses and programs are promoted as ways to help stretch resources and generate savings, the reality is that financial investment is usually required to create, upgrade and/or support the infrastructure and systems necessary to achieve quality courses and programs (Ingliss, 1999; Robinson, 2001; Boettcher, 2004; Hillstock, 2005; Abrami, Bernard et al, 2006; Ruth, Sammons & Poulin, 2007).

Distance learning may certainly offer savings with regards to classroom space requirements and commuting time and expenses. It may even save on printing costs for reading materials and other school supplies (Inglis, 1999). But to think that any distance education program translates into significant savings for an institution without there first being an investment in resources is a definite misconception (Inglis, 1999; Boettcher, 2004; Hillstock, 2005). When done correctly, with a vision for an effective, high quality system for the delivery and facilitation of education, online programs can be expensive (Robinson, 2001; Ruth, Sammons & Poulin, 2007). Not only do they often require a substantial financial outlay to install or upgrade existing technology to support the volume of users and the types of applications (software), but faculty and student training is required (Harasim, Hiltz et al, 1995; McLachlan-Smith & Gunn, 2001; Robinson, 2001; Palloff & Pratt, 2001; Hillstock, 2005), as well as the availability of a support

network, to tackle the every day technical (software & hardware) and non-technical related issues (Owston, 2003).

In this age of the global connectivity most institutions are already wired to use computers and technology as part of their day-to-day administrative and communication practices. A “help desk” of sorts is most likely available to troubleshoot problems encountered by faculty, administrators and staff. Offering courses online will predictably increase the need for additional services during extended hours, especially considering the variety of applications that are available and the continuous need for upgrades on equipment and software. Students accessing courses remotely at “anytime” will most likely require support outside of regular school hours, (Hillstock, 2005) as will the faculty facilitating the online courses. If not already available this extra demand on the “help desk” function will create the need for additional personnel.

Role of faculty.

“The change in the concept of the time an instructor spends with students will present an even bigger challenge for the administrator. The time and effort an instructor expends becomes a linear function of the number of students in a class. Administrators can no longer economize on educational effort by increasing class size. The instructor can no longer adapt to class size by allowing less time for individual interaction with students.”

(Harasim, Hiltz et al; 1995, p. 232)

The creation of online courses involves more work and time spent by faculty than the creation of a lesson that is delivered in a face-to-face environment (Boettcher, 2004; Porter, 2004; Hillstock, 2005). A rough rule of thumb that can be applied is that it takes approximately 10 hours of work to design and develop 1 hour of online instruction using basic online tools. (This does not include the time spent by other resources that help to implement the courses.) If administrators expect faculty to maintain existing workloads

while taking on new instructional practices (e.g., deconstructing and rebuilding the lesson plan in light of the new “learning space”, or learning new software, etc.) incentive structures may need to be changed in order to encourage continued participation and compensate for the extra demand on time (Boschmann, 1998; AFT, 2003; Owston, 2003; Porter, 2004).

Although it is not yet common practice, faculty teaching online courses are sometimes compensated by release time or a stipend (ranging anywhere from \$1000-\$5000 per course) or both (AFT, 2003; Hillstock, 2005).

Other times assistance with the creation of the courses is available through an instructional designer or a technologist at the cost of \$42-\$45,000 US per year (Hillstock, 2005). In addition some institutions are providing faculty with an experienced “distance mentor” (Hillstock, 2005), whose responsibility it is to offer one-to-one coaching to help develop the faculty members’ approach to online instruction.

A chance to examine and reflect on online instructional ideas with someone who has already experienced some of the challenges involved presents an opportunity for continuous improvement of the curriculum and helps to break down some of the barriers to participation (Chuang, Thompson & Schmidt, 2003). Mentors can either be part of the existing faculty population or hired from external sources. In either case, time is still spent and some degree of compensation is usually negotiated.

Faculty need to see and experience that the “need for change is worthwhile, and have confidence in their ability to bring about the necessary innovations with appropriate support” (Errington, 2001, p.33). Chizmar & Williams (2001) in their article *What do faculty want?* state that 63% of faculty respondents would prefer examples of “real-world

applications” that they could use to demonstrate concepts. When faculty are not given the opportunity to explore different techniques and options for creating engaged learning modules or are able to see what is possible relative to personal and student achievement, there is limited likelihood of a change in beliefs and perception of value towards online instruction (Errington, 2001).

“Decisions about what teachers feel they can, or will support by way of flexible learning initiatives are influenced by the degree of perceived support available at all levels of the institution.” (Errington, 2001, p.29)

Studies have shown a discrepancy on the part of administrators and their faculty relative to factors that would motivate and encourage participation in online distance education, specifically intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Betts, 1998; Schifter, 2000). Therefore it would be helpful for administrators to poll faculty and staff members to identify the types of rewards that hold greatest merit. And through implementation of these rewards send a strong message on the behaviors and practices that are valued at the institution (Boshmann, 1998).

Role of students. Just as faculty need assistance with the new teaching environments and their roles as teachers, so do students need support with the new learning environments and their roles as students (Palloff & Pratt, 2001). Many institutions are already set up with student learning and/or support centers. The incorporation of a pedagogical support service for the “How To” of independent study and online learning could be absorbed by the existing centers, but will more than likely require either additional personnel, training or both.

Whether the courses are offered in hybrid versions with only a percentage of class time spent on campus, or 100% online, the creation and upkeep of the infrastructure

necessary to keep things running, requires resources, time and space. Depending on the degree and complexity to which an online initiative will be incorporated, financial commitments cannot be avoided. The return on the investment should be part of the evaluation process on whether or not the innovation or changes to include different degrees of online distance education will prove beneficial in the long run.

Student enrolments and class size. Another area that can affect the financial return “per seat” as well as student satisfaction levels is the number of students to be enrolled in an online class. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) the total number of college enrolments have increased from 26% in the 1980’s to 32% in the 1990’s and 38% by 2003 and will continue to grow 16% over the next ten years (Jones, 2003). With this increase in demand for education, post-secondary institutions face the challenge of finding “space”. However, the originally envisioned “super-size” classes are unrealistic if an institution wants to offer a quality program that runs effectively with high student satisfaction and retention rates (Newcombe, 1999). The National Education Association (NEA) 2000 Report on online class sizes found approximately 30% of the classes containing 1-20 students, and approximately another 30% had 21-40 students. Close to 20% had 41-100 students and the remaining 20% were not sure of how many students were in their classes (Colwell & Jenks, 2004).

The literature recommends that learning is best facilitated in a collaborative environment or to use e-learning vocabulary, “learning communities”, (Harasim, Hiltz et al, 1995; Paloff & Pratt, 1999; Paloff & Pratt, 2003; White & Baker, 2004; Hiltz & Goldman, 2005; Macdonald, 2006). This requires that students are able to interact with one another and share their interpretations, ideas and questions in a manageable forum. In

order to optimize interactivity, class size should stay between 15-20 students with a maximum of 25 in total (AFT, 2003; Paloff & Pratt, 2003; Hillstock, 2005). Hiltz & Goldman (2005) indicate that classes ranging from 25-30 students tend to be most successful, but add that this depends on a number of factors including the level of online teaching experience of the instructor, the degree to which students have been prepared to study in an online environment, the complexity of the technology used, the level of support and training available for both faculty and students and the subject matter. All of these should be taken into account, recognizing that if the group is too small, the dynamics needed to maintain a continuous level of interaction fall short. If the group is too large, it becomes difficult for the students to keep up and participate in a meaningful dialogue and/or for the instructor/faculty to monitor the discussions (Ladyshefsky, 2004). Additionally, the ability to “build trust online and provide ‘hand-holding’...support, and promoting informal relationships”, found to be important for student online interactions (Tu & McIsaac, 2002, p.18), is hindered by oversized classes. Even in the hybrid online versions, group size should only be large enough to sustain dynamic discourse, but not too large to result in frustrating the members and causing them to literally disconnect (Colwell & Jenks, 2004; Paloff & Pratt, 2007).

Administrators face a great challenge achieving economies of scale with class size limits that rival the number of students attending the “on-campus” courses, especially when one considers the extra support needed to sustain the online environment.

Retention Rates.

Student retention rates are important for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the inability to assist students to achieve their academic goals. Low student

graduation rates or retention rates have financial implications and negatively impact accreditation and the reputation of the institution. Managing drop out rates and sustaining attractive enrollment levels is important for efficient management of financial resources and human capital (Nitsch, 2003). Some studies show that student drop out rates for the online courses offered at higher education institutions exceed those for the same classes offered synchronously and on campus leading to the conclusion that the method is ineffective for delivering quality education (Phipps & Merisotis, 1999; Lynch, 2001; Palloff & Pratt, 2001; Nitsch 2003; Hillstock, 2005). This is misleading. Drop out rates should not be the sole factor in determining whether or not a program or class is effective. There could be various reasons which correlate with students choosing to drop a course such as student characteristics, socioeconomic factors, life changing circumstances and/or the quality of instruction or support, etc., (Diaz, 2002; Nitsch, 2003). None of these situations is necessarily exclusive to an online distance course or its equivalent delivered in a face-to-face in-class environment.

Accreditation.

Administrators must ensure that their course offering, whether available fully or partially online, conforms to accreditation standards. If the program(s) offered are not seen as credible they lose value to prospective students, thereby affecting enrolment levels and ultimately the ability to compete in the educational arena. For instance only 13% out of all the MBA programs available online, are accredited by a nationally recognized accreditation body such as the Association for the Advancement of Collegiate Studies in Business (AACSB). Given the large number of online MBA programs this

number is still respectable, but it also means that a large percentage of programs are not accredited and reduce the credibility of these online degrees.

Comparatively, however, only two of the Graduate Library Sciences programs available online are not accredited by the American Library Association (ALA). And out of seventy-three online Nursing Programs, only one is not accredited by the National League for Nursing Accreditation Commission (NLNAC) or the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), (Ruth, 2006).

When administrators consider incorporating courses that are offered online as part of their programs they must not lose sight of the importance of accreditation. A poor online reputation can not only deter any further interest in online courses by faculty or students but also impact the reputation of the institution as a whole.

Knowledge Management.

In addition to balancing budgets and competing for student enrollments, administrators are concerned with the loss of expertise as faculty members retire or change assignments. Sharing educational materials and content amongst faculty is one way to try and retain historical data and information. Another is to try to reproduce the classroom experience using video and audio techniques so that it can be referenced or retrieved in the future (Feenberg, 1999). However this perceived as “packaging” of information and is seen as a threat by faculty who often resist recording presentations of their courses even for archival purposes. They express concern about the possibility of “adjunct faculty” (part-time faculty typically paid at a lower rate on a per course basis – Ruth, Sammons & Poulin, 2007) hired to facilitate the online courses using their material and ultimately replacing them.

The concern about job security is real (Howell, Williams & Lindsay, 2003). Institutions such as the University of Maryland University College, Baker College, Central Texas College, Walden University, Capella University and Phoenix University “have fewer than 15% of full-time faculty teaching online courses” (Ruth, Sammons & Poulin, 2007, p. 32). However studies show core full-time faculty delivering the largest portion of courses offered online in both private and public post-secondary accredited institutions (Allen & Seaman, 2005). This is largely attributed to the desire for a high quality course offering made possible by senior experienced faculty members. In fact, students have been shown to prefer interacting with faculty who are knowledgeable and “expert” and are concerned about their academic success (Brewer, DeJonge & Stout, 2001; Oblinger & Hawkins, 2005; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005).

Unfortunately senior faculty members have typically not been early adopters of technology and online initiatives in the past. Their tenured positions and job security allow them to be more selective than their younger, less experienced counterparts. Unfortunately their lack of participation does not only impact credibility for the institutions online program(s), but also denies students taking online courses the opportunity to work with highly experienced educators (Giannoni & Tesone, 2003). Furthermore reluctance on the part of senior faculty to teach in an online environment, may actually promote the hiring of part-time or adjunct faculty to cover these courses (Ruth, Sammons & Poulin, 2007).

One of the keys to success in introducing any educational change initiative and receiving some degree of acceptance is to improve relationships and trust amongst faculty and their administration. Administrators need to be sensitive to faculty perceptions of

their dispensability and solicit faculty input for ways to document their valued experience and know-how while encouraging their roles as leaders in the discovery and dissemination of knowledge (Oliver, 1996).

Intellectual Property.

In addition to the concern of the loss or replacement of knowledgeable and experienced faculty, there is also the issue of intellectual property (IP). Intellectual property refers to works of literature, the arts, research, performances and broadcasts, inventions and discoveries, industrial designs, trademarks and commercial names and designations which are protected by law against unfair competition. Although laws to enforce the IP rights are suggested by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), under the direction of the United Nations IP laws and their enforcement varies from country to country. While copyright laws protect the rights of authors and publishers of books and paper copy texts and the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) protects against unauthorized or illegal use of digital media, the Technology, Education and Copyright Harmonization (TEACH) Act, deals with copyrights of materials used in online environments. Anyone who has done research or creative work knows how difficult it can sometimes be to retain the authenticity and receive credit for their work. With research sources, literature and documentation available on web-based platforms, the tracking and retention of original “authorship” becomes even more difficult and presents another hurdle to overcome when considering online courses.

Administrators and faculty should address intellectual property rights upfront, and not as an afterthought, to protect the ownership of scholarly work that is made available or accessible online (Cookson, 2000). In practice many institutions have implemented

security policy and procedures, not only to protect work done by their own faculty, staff and students, but also to help define the use of software and web-based materials (eg., video-clips, interactive software) in online environments (e.g., Responsible Use Of Electronic Communications document at Cornell University, and Carnegie-Mellon University's policy indicates compliance with US Copyright Law, defining the IP rights for work conducted by members of the university – Raman, 2004, p.5-6).

The willingness of an organization to update its security policies to include guidelines on intellectual property and penalties for violations, will not insure against infractions, but as with any “law” will outline the limits of acceptable and unacceptable practices and offer a device against which to measure behavior.

Challenges intrinsic to academic institutions and their local geographies might be pushing administrators to attempt to integrate online distance education courses and programs. Initially the cost of technology combined with set up and training and long-term support costs will certainly alter the degree to which online distance education can provide the proverbial ticket to financial liberty. Faculty workload and student online learning needs and the protection of intellectual property are just some of the important factors that administrators must address. A comprehensive examination of what online distance learning models mean to members of the institution and where and how they perceive value will reveal the issues that hinder adoption of innovation. From these a common vision can be developed, increasing the capacity for change. (Maid, 2003; Owston, 2003).

Issues for Students

“From the students’ perspective depending on their age, level of education and academic motivation and learning style (Diaz, 2000, Diaz and Cartnal 1999,

Dille & Mezack, 1991, Gibson & Graff, 1992 and Thompson, 1998) online distance education removes the barriers of limited access to higher levels of education due to time and geography or social responsibilities.” (Diaz, 2002).

Today, the original vision of applying technology to accommodate those students who did not have easy access to the campus, has been extended to potentially include “all” students. Working adults, students with physical limitations or challenges, individuals uncomfortable in classroom settings, faculty with teaching responsibilities at different institutions located in different geographic regions, even students wanting to complete credits while working, all view online distance education as a means to achieve their personal goals. Distance education encompasses “all arrangements for providing instruction through print or electronic communications media to persons engaged in planned learning in a place or time different from that of the instructor or instructors” (Moore, 1990 as quoted in Maguire, 2005, p.1). Furthermore higher education institutions seeking to attract adult students on a global basis are using online distance education as a way to partner with corporations, offering working adults an opportunity to complete post-secondary degrees without leaving their work and family responsibilities behind.

Managing Learner Expectations.

It is well known throughout the literature on distance education that online students typically tend to be older in age, have spent more hours in school, earning more degrees and with higher grade scores than their counterparts who have attended traditional face-to-face classes (Gibson & Graff, 1992, Thompson, 1998, Howell, Williams & Lindsay, 2003). The average online learner has been found to have more “life and academic

experiences”, rendering them better equipped for the independent, self-directed study important for successful learning via distance education. (Diaz, 2002).

However, for the novice online student the first time experience can prove intimidating. Simply by its very nature online education tends to isolate the students more than if they were to attend a class (Harasim, Hiltz et al, 1995; Paloff & Pratt, 2003). Students, who are otherwise accustomed to listening to lectures and taking notes to cover much of the required material, are unprepared for the amount of reading and self-discipline required for an online course, and consequently find the workload heavy and the pace, intense. In addition, communication is predominantly, if not always, written via email or chat and takes some getting used to. Writing skills may or may not be honed and the documentation of one’s ideas for all time and to a relatively unknown audience is sometimes intimidating (Harasim, Hiltz et al, 1995; Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Hiltz & Shea, 2005). Furthermore, lack of immediate feedback or response to messages from faculty, peers or support functions, can be discouraging and make the student feel isolated (Harasim, Hiltz et al, 1995; Badger, 2000; Paloff & Pratt, 2003). Add to this the possibility of technical glitches with hardware or software, unexpected delays from learning systems that are unpredictable or difficult to decipher and you have an environment that can be over whelming for anyone trying to study online, let alone the novice online participant (Bischoff, 2000; Brewer, Jong & Stout, 2001).

Students who have never taken an online course often have the impression that they will have more time do their work, or that the course will be easier and that the computer screen will merely replace the teacher in class (Hillstock, 2005). Once they realize that online courses require more time, collaboration and personal involvement in the learning

process, they may opt to discontinue the course. These students will drop the course because it does not meet their learner style expectations, not because of the quality of information and skills that can be learned (Diaz, 2002; Hillstock, 2005). In fact taking the students' learning style into consideration and demonstrating self-regulating learning practices will always result in a better quality education whether online or in an in-class environment. This is where faculty coaching and support to be able to identify learner preferences in a hybrid or online environment will contribute towards positive experiences for both the teacher and student.

The results of the 2006 *E-learning Benchmarking Project* sponsored by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training, showed that positive experience with an online course builds confidence for participation in online courses in the future. Ivers, Lee and Carter-Wells (2005) in their study on *Students' Attitudes and Perceptions of Online Instruction* provide examples of how the quality of a students' prior experience with technology, online interaction with peers and teachers and support received from their institution encouraged or hindered their motivation to learn online.

“Findings indicate the need to provide a stable and supportive learning environment in order for students to have a positive attitude toward online learning. Positive attitudes and perceptions promote retention and learning achievement.” (p. 15)

Academic institutions can increase the likelihood of students having a positive online experience, by helping them prepare for the differences between learning online and in face-to-face classes. A pre-test or self-assessment can alert the student as to whether they possess the learning preferences and skills and that are typically associated with successful online learning. Where there is a gap coaching on meta-cognitive strategies

will help to support the students' need to be independent learners and promote the change in mindset required to apply self-regulated practices (Harasim, Hiltz et al, 1995; Paloff & Pratt, 2001; Piskurich, 2004; White & Baker, 2004; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). And orientation on course management systems and training on software applications can help towards increasing student confidence with technology and reduce the possibilities of communication breakdowns during the course.

Students who are uncomfortable with change however, will still find the new learning environment difficult and choose to discontinue participation (Brewer, DeJonge & Stout, 2001; Hillstock, 2005). Faculty can contribute significantly to the making students more comfortable with online learning through introductory sessions that give an overview of objectives of the course, outline the activities to be completed, perhaps demonstrating one, allow for testing of the technology and a chance for students to meet (Harasim, Hiltz et al, 1995; Paloff & Pratt, 2001; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). With the hybrid configurations students often have the chance to meet face-to-face for the first class or orientation period and during the term. A face-to-face introductory session is not always possible for the 100% online courses depending on geographic restrictions.

Student Interaction.

In *Making the Most of College: Students Speak their Minds* (2001) a ten year study of college students by Richard Light highlights that in addition to enjoying the diversity of the college campus, the interaction with teachers and learning outside of the classroom, students preferred structured courses, working in team environments, and developing their own projects. Contact between students, their peers and faculty is seen as key for motivation and an essential support mechanism in achieving educational

objectives The use of technology and interactive web-based activities in online courses can offer an environment in which students “engage with the material and learn by doing, refining their understanding as they build new knowledge” (Smart & Cappel, 2006, p. 202).

A great benefit for students who participate in online distance education classes is that the usual back and forth rapid discussions evident in the face-to-face classroom are replaced with a slower, more reflective online interaction. This can result in a dialogue that is deeper in meaning. Given the time, students can think before they write. When they communicate online they challenge ideas, seek clarification or try to convey their own interpretation of a concept in writing. This practice of writing invites a certain discipline to thinking through one’s thoughts (Feenberg, 1999) and the quality of communication through correspondence is enhanced. Depending on faculty/student preferences, there is also the benefit of having other students respond, helping to build the online community and individual student confidence. In addition, students who might not be able to express their ideas easily in a classroom setting, might be likely to participate more actively during the online communications. In this way interactivity is increased and students and their peers and faculty have the opportunity to connect more frequently than only the more vocal participants often evident in an in-class environment.

The philosophy that humans do not learn well in a vacuum has historically been supported by many learning theorists. John Dewey’s (1966) recognition of the “value of the individual experience” in “collaboration with others” (Conrad & Donaldson, 2004, p.4) in order to create meaning was also applied by Malcolm Knowles (1980) in his concept of andragogy and Vygotsky (1981, as referenced by Conrad & Donaldson, 2004)

in the “zone of proximal development”. Both stress the optimization of the individual learning process by interacting with and/or being challenged by others.

The opportunity to engage with others is even more present in the hybrid or blended versions of online distance education where increased intimacy and trust levels achieved through online discussions can spill over to the face-to-face sessions that can make up 25-50% of the class schedule (Rovai & Jordan, 2004).

Interaction in online environments requires different skills that do not always come naturally especially after many years of being a more passive participant in the classroom, absorbing the information presented by the teacher. Sitting back and waiting to be provided all the information is an ineffective strategy for learning in virtual environments. Studying online requires students to be comfortable with independent reflective practices while reaching out and collaborating with their peers and instructor in a computer mediated environment (Palloff & Pratt, 2003; Piskurich, 2004; White & Baker, 2004). This is a shift in roles which many students find difficult to accept (Palloff & Pratt, 2007). Therefore academic institutions need to provide support mechanisms to orient students to the “new rules”. They need to create opportunities to help them adjust to the online environment thereby increasing their probability of success (Ives, Lee & Carter-Wells, 2005).

Issues for Faculty

“The ‘naturalness’ of change is not always an easy concept for individuals to accept. There is something very attractive and reassuring about stability and continuity. ...Regularity may at times be rather tedious, but it has an appealing side. Many people, when faced with the prospect of change, particularly if it involves a major readjustment, will try to cling on to the familiar and the predictable.” (Oliver, 1996, p. 3)

Research over the past three decades exhibits a pendulum phenomenon regarding the perceptions of faculty towards distance education. In the mid-nineteen-nineties, Olcott and Wright (1995) ascertained that faculty members appeared reluctant to participate in distance education. The National Distance Education Instruction by Postsecondary Faculty and Staff Report of 1998, showed that all faculty surveyed agreed that “personal interaction is crucial to the learning process,” but they did not agree as to whether computer mediated personal interaction was as effective as face-to-face interaction. In 1999, Inman, Kerwin & Mayes found that while faculty were willing to teach an online class, they rated those courses as “equal or lower in quality than traditional courses taught on campus” (Hannay & Newvine, 2006, p3). Research by Jones, Lindner et al (2002) showed that a high percentage of teachers (85%) were not “philosophically opposed to distance education” and that experience with teaching online improves the perception of online distance education (NEA 2000 Survey of Traditional and Distance Learning Higher Education Members). Two years later, Giannoni and Tesone (2003) referred to the existence of disparity in academia regarding the perception of distance education being “second class” identifying the reason for this lower ranking as largely due to the lack of available “interpersonal contact” (Seay, Rudolph & Chamberlain, 2001; Schifter, 2002).

Are Hybrid Courses the Answer?

If face-to-face interaction is important for faculty and a higher quality of education, yet students continue to press for more flexible access to education and will select academic institutions largely on this basis, then a “compromise” might be a good alternative.

Hybrid or blended courses defined as “courses in which a significant portion of the learning activities have been moved online, and time traditionally spent in the classroom is reduced but not eliminated” (Garnham & Kaleta, 2002, p.1) is an attempt at taking the “the best of both worlds” to create flexible yet active independent learning, while reducing required class “seat time” (Garnham & Kaleta, 2002; Young 2002; Oblinger & Hawkins, 2005). The hybrid model is not a “pure” version of online education facilitating learning “anytime-anywhere” (Keegan, 1996) - since learners must be in the vicinity of the institution in order to engage in the face-to-face component. However it has become quite popular because it draws from the strengths of both face-to-face and online learning environments (Skill & Young, 2003; Woods, Baker & Hopper, 2004; Garrison & Vaughn, 2008).

The American Teachers Federation’s (AFT) *Technology Review* (2003) summarizing a number of scholars who have conducted research and written on hybrid online courses, indicates that faculty tend to be more open to online distance education in a hybrid or blended format. The opportunity to balance face-to-face student interaction and collaborative work with critical thinking prompted by advanced technical tools and online instructional techniques addresses their need for quality content and personal contact. Reports on *Technology and Student Success in Higher Education: Faculty's Perception of Technology and Student Success* (2006) issued by McGraw-Hill Education and McGraw-Hill Ryerson for the USA and Canada respectively also support this.

Mossavar-Rahmani and Larson-Daugherty in their article *Supporting the Hybrid Learning Model: A New Proposition* (2007) tell us that students also benefit greatly from hybrid online programs due to the scaffolding of learning activities and communication

available both online and face-to-face. Time spent online is counterbalanced with time spent face-to-face and students can exploit a broad range of mediums with which to communicate and develop collaborative relationships and gain confidence in their ability to express their ideas. Hybrid versions of distance education present the faculty member or instructor with options to encourage student-to-student interaction (one on one), student-to-teacher interaction and group interactions, while strengthening written and communication skills (Garnham & Kaleta, 2002; AFT 2003; Woods, Baker & Hopper, 2004).

Changing Roles.

For an institution to even consider taking on a change initiative such as incorporating online distance education into their program offering, participating faculty need to be willing to re-examine how they teach. Online courses require a shifting of roles, even at times, a shifting of personalities for both the teacher and the student (Palloff & Pratt, 2001; Hillstock, 2005). Delivering an effective hybrid or 100% online course is very different from delivering a course in a face-to-face in class environment, especially if the classic lecture method is the instructional strategy of choice, followed by discussion and multiple choice tests. (It is even arguable that this method is less than desirable for the traditional, face-to-face mode of instruction.)

Palloff & Pratt (1999, 2001) and Meyer (2002) speak about the importance of “engaged learning” or constructivism for online distance education. Hilton in his 2006 article *The Future of Higher Education: Sunrise or the Perfect Storm* (p.4) reminds us that:

“The difference between information and knowledge is subtle but important. Knowledge is what you do with information.

Knowledge is how you make meaning out of information. And, usually, you gain knowledge through an interactive process—by interacting with someone or by doing some critical analysis or further exploration of the information. Achieving knowledge requires a much richer and more complicated environment than that required for accessing information.”

Encouraging student participation in creating knowledge is beneficial regardless of the environment in which the learning takes place. The mere transference of course reading material or slides to a web-site does not constitute quality instructional design for an effective online course, just as reading to a class from a text without constructive discussion groups or exercises does not constitute the most effective classroom technique in traditional environments. An engaged learning process emphasizes student-centered learning with the students and instructor working together to build knowledge (Conrad & Donaldson, 2004).

Instructional Strategy.

A student’s learning strategy is driven mostly by evaluation. If the evaluation is recall-dependent, students will only “surface-learn”. In order to encourage students to engage in “deeper learning”, faculty need to integrate collaborative activities and exercises in the course design (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). However, if students are not given the opportunity to reflect and construct their own meaning because there are overwhelmed with too many activities and group-work assignments to complete and text to read, a lower level of learning or complete withdrawal occurs. The challenge for faculty lies in their ability to create just enough activities that encourage online interaction and “engages” the learners to participate in the online community.

“It is one thing to facilitate collaborative learning in a traditional, face-to-face classroom setting, but quite another to do so over thousands of miles that span several time zones and cultures. In this context,

the learning community exercises some special qualities”
(Irwin & Berge, 2006, p.4)

Faculty Training and Support.

Peer coaching by online experts or the availability of an instructional designer or mentors who can recommend various design options, activities and learning objects, act as a sounding board for faculty (Chuang, Thompson & Schmidt, 2003). For instance, the hybrid online courses, present the opportunity to complement in-class topic introductions with interactive assignments or research conducted online (Garrison & Vaughan; 2008). However if faculty create an imbalance (e.g. too much text and not enough opportunity for discourse) for the online portion intended to support the in-class exercise, the result will only be “deep reading” of the text as opposed to deeper understanding of the concepts.

In their book *Distance Learning: Principles of Effective Design, Delivery and Evaluation*, Mehrotra, Hollister and McGahey (2001) underscore the importance of training and support for faculty and staff providing online instruction as a key component for the success of any distance program. They state that conversion or supplementation of distance courses or materials will require time for proper development and suggest that administrators allow for reduced teaching loads for implementers, at least initially, to ease their learning curve of technology, software and reinforce good instructional practices which are critical regardless of the mode of knowledge communication.

“Teachers can only create a supportive, creative environment if they are given the tools and time to develop meaningful materials and activities, as well as learn how to teach online”. (Porter, 2004, p.15)

Howell, Williams and Lindsay (2003) in their publication, *Thirty-Two Trends Affecting Distance Education: An Informed Foundation for Strategic Planning*, argue that

the need for faculty development, support and training in the use and application of technology is not only growing, but recent surveys have rated it fifth in the overall “strategic concern” by educational administrations. Although funding is sometimes made available for training and course development, the time required to properly design, develop and implement a successful online distance education class is not always available.

Initiatives such as Project Merlot (Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching) is an effort to try and provide instructors and faculty members with quality instructional materials and help to avoid re-inventing the wheel. Online mentoring programs for online faculty, although not widely promoted to date, are being created allowing for online discussion forums regarding online class management issues, motivation and assessment issues, etc.

Other possibilities for teacher training and coaching include peer mentoring or the assignment of an instructional designer who can help faculty select the appropriate tools to achieve their objectives (Chuang, Thompson & Schmidt, 2003). Regardless of the support, faculty still need time to re-examine course objectives and devise new methods to demonstrate course content.

Student Expectations and Time Management.

Students participating in online distance courses expect to have access to faculty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to obtain feedback and assistance with assignments (Hillstock, 2005). Teacher access is cited by online students as very important in reducing their feeling of isolation. But unless expectations are set upfront, the number of times that students may contact their teacher goes well beyond the typical “office hours” of the

traditional in-class instructor. It is not unreasonable that students expect to be able to contact faculty outside of posted office hours to review drafts of work, answer questions, give guidance, or simply exchange ideas. The online design of the course encourages more frequent interaction (Howell, Williams & Lindsay, 2003). However, faculty new to online instructional techniques tend to get caught up with “staying online” so as to not desert their students. The predicament lies in re-setting students’ expectations for access. Faculty need to be coached on time management and setting limits for when communication with students can occur. And in turn, faculty need to guide their student’s expectations of their accessibility right from the start and set firm “office hours” and email communication protocols.

Class Size and Faculty Efficacy.

We saw earlier that class size can affect the pace and quality of communication in hybrid and 100% online courses between faculty and students. In addition, large online classes also create limitations for student evaluation methods because of the impact on faculty workload. When student enrollment is too great, standard testing methodologies (e.g. multiple choice or short answer essay) are often used versus projects or assignments that allow for higher levels of learning (e.g. constructivist) (Conrad & Donaldson, 2004). Research has shown that for distance education programs to work effectively the teacher/student ratio must actually be less than that currently seen in traditional face-to-face classrooms (Arbaugh, 2000 as referenced in Ladyshevsky, 2004).

The 2000 National Education Association survey of *Traditional and Distance Learning in Higher Education Members* noted that decisions about class size for online courses should take into account the amount of time required both to prepare and update

the online courses as well as the ongoing personal interaction between faculty and students and students with their peers. The flexibility of “anytime and anywhere” education brings with it an expectation that teachers and classmates are accessible “anytime and anywhere”. Although this is one of the key attractions of online learning, it sets no limits on the breadth of communication that is exchanged and places additional demand on faculty. Hybrid online courses present an additional challenge with alternating face-to-face and online instruction. Any decision about class size should take into consideration the quality of education for students, departmental requirements, faculty workload and experience, the institution’s technical infrastructure and capacity for support. Adequately addressing this issue can help eliminate one of the identified concerns by faculty expressing reluctance to adopt online courses because of the impact class size can have on the quality of the education for their students and on their own workload.

Authentication and Assessment.

We saw earlier that authentication of work is a concern for administrators. Faculty also struggle with “authenticity issues” when faced with the challenge of validating student work. There are a number of ways in which students can cheat on online examinations including recruiting another student to complete the test with them or engaging others not enrolled in the specific course (Colwell & Jenks, 2005). Contrary to examinations for traditional face-to-face courses that are administered on campus at a certain time and place, online assessments are often administered over an extended period consistent with “anytime, anyplace” philosophy of online learning. Unless students actually come on campus to write their exams (online or in paper form), “current

authentication techniques” are not sophisticated enough to verify that the person taking the exam is in fact who they say they are. Nor is it possible to accurately determine whether or not a student has completed an assignment or research paper. These types of issues press administrators and faculty to revisit current assessment practices and policies. But they should not be considered as arguments against the effectiveness of online distance education. Traditional in-class evaluation methods are plagued with similar issues. It is just good practice to vary the class assignments, topics for papers and discussion points and examinations. Assistance with different online evaluation techniques and class size limits will contribute to faculty achieving their instructional objectives online.

Technology and Social Structure.

When discussing issues that influence the values and beliefs held by faculty on online environments, the presence and use of technology on social structure should not be forgotten. The introduction of different types of technology changes not only the way in which an institution operates digitally, but also how its community interacts on a social level (Connolly, 2005; Irwin & Berge, 2006).

Those that embrace the use of technology typically secure increased access to information and an (albeit informal) change in their status occurs as a result. On a formal and organizational level, those that are more adept in the use of technology and digital communication tend to be “in the know”. And depending on the institution’s culture and the advocacy by administrators for or against online education, may receive recognition as “leaders” or trend setters. Furthermore, faculty interested in collaborating with their peers, internally and externally with other institutions, can use their online skills to

exchange best practices and showcase their expertise (Dooley & Murphrey, 2000). They would be privy to information that others might not receive.

The research tells us that faculty and administrators at post-secondary institutions are motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically (Maguire, 2005). Personal motivation to use technology (Betts, 1998; Lee, 2001; Rockwell, et al, 1999; Schifter, 2000), perceiving teaching via distance learning as an intellectual challenge and contribution to overall job satisfaction (Betts, 1998; Schifter, 2000) are cited as some of the intrinsic motivators in the research. External incentives are listed as tenure and promotion along with peer support and recognition.

On one hand the use of technology presents opportunities to strengthen social interaction and the exchange of expertise. On the other hand it is can also be seen as a threat to the old order of importance and hierarchy. The requirement for different knowledge and skills to optimize the use of technology in online courses causes a shift in authority “challenging some to grow and causing others to drop out or fall back” (Connolly, 2005, p. 5). Anyone who has taken an online “text” course will attest to the difference a well thought out lesson plan with interactive software can make relative to maintaining student interest levels. (Brown & Voltz, 2005). It is no wonder that those who benefit from the recognition associated with the use of technology continue to try and integrate more and more sophisticated applications creating a greater rift between themselves and non-participants.

On another level, the social interaction between students and students and teacher is altered. Firstly, students often indicate that communication with faculty is improved. The expectation for accelerated response time and feedback is heightened. Students feel that

faculty are more “present” because they can send them an email 24/7 and most of the time receive a relatively quick response. Secondly, reserved students who might otherwise not speak up in class, may feel more inclined to share their viewpoint in the online environments.

The results of a longitudinal study on *Faculty Perceptions of Technology and Student Success in Higher Education*, published by McGraw-Hill (surveying faculty in both the USA and Canada) showed faculty’s acknowledgment of the importance of technology in education jump from 22% in 1999 to 57% in 2003 and holding at 54% in 2006. The 2006 data also showed, almost two-thirds of the faculty surveyed considered themselves as “enthusiastic” or “self-sufficient” in the use of technology.

Faculty may be very confident in their ability to deliver a course online, but when technology breaks down during or before an online course, class is essentially “cancelled”. Then what? Effective distance education programs or courses involve a “complex array of infrastructures and personnel” (Lockee, Moore & Burton, 2002). Organizational, technical and instructional issues are interdependent and if one of these is weak, the others are affected. The quality and degree of support and maintenance for technology has an impact on faculty’s ability to deliver quality online courses (Willis, 1993). Faculty and students expect technology to “work”. Dissatisfaction with the level of support necessary for proper functioning of technology (hardware and software) will influence their desire to use technology in the future (McGraw-Hill, 2006)

Summary

We cannot ignore that the environment in which post-secondary education operates is in itself changing. In the past colleges and universities did not have to compete with

corporations or online institutions for knowledgeable faculty. Student enrollment levels that would support justification for funding were manageable. Accreditation for the providers of educational opportunities is no longer restricted to the traditional universities and colleges and the competition for student enrollment is fierce. Not only are post-secondary institutions vying for the same population, but training through partnerships between academia and business and degrees offered online by accredited online institutions are considered attractive alternatives to attending class on campus. While the competition amongst institutions and organizations has never been higher, the “the demand for higher education has never been greater...neither has...the pressure for change” (Larson & Strehle, 2001, p.54).

Historically educators have learned that the “personal costs of trying new innovations are often high...and seldom is there any indication that innovations are worth the investment” (House, 1974 as quoted by Fullan, 1991, p.23). Even though “innovations” in the past were not comparable in the level of sophistication and capability of the technology available to online distance education facilitators today, the stigma of great promises for advancement that was never achieved still remains. This makes it all the more difficult for institutions to examine the potential for online distance education without bias and reinforces the decision to preserve the status quo (Rogers, 1995; Rogers, 2003).

Building it Doesn't Mean it Will Work.

Despite knowing what does or doesn't work and the systems and mechanisms that need to be in place to operate effective online distance education programs, administrators and faculty still need to be wary of the “simple solution”. Installing

technology and/or creating services that are touted as necessary to sustain high quality models of online teaching and learning does not automatically ensure that the adoption of innovation will be successful (Paloff & Pratt, 2001; MacDonald & Thompson, 2005). In fact it does not even guarantee that the innovation will be sustained if the members of an institution do not “unfreeze” (Kent, 2004) and change their beliefs.

The purpose of this study is not to create a case for or against hybrid/blended or 100% online distance education. Nor do I intend to generate an all inclusive collection of “Do’s and Don’ts” for the implementation of innovation in education. Many more qualified than have already achieved this - and several are cited throughout this work. I merely hope to trigger constructive dialogue and evaluation and challenge those who are faced with decisions about the adoption of online learning to critically examine the opportunities and implications before drawing overly cautious or optimistic conclusions.

Access to real, differentiated and pragmatic information about issues and possibilities related to online learning initiatives, helps members of educational institutions make well informed strategic decisions as opposed to responding to fear. By understanding the requirements for effective online education models, and examining the values and beliefs of the members who will ultimately be “living the change” relative to these requirements, an institution can determine their “capacity for implementing an innovation” (Owston, 2003, p129). Without sufficient capacity, effective change is not possible and initiatives end up draining the system they were intended to support (Robinson, 2001; Owston, 2003).

CHAPTER 2

Procedure

Choosing a Qualitative Research Strategy

“Research in education is a disciplined attempt to address questions or solve problems through the collection and analysis of primary data for the purpose of description, explanation, generalization and prediction.” (Anderson, 2002, p6)

Given a problem to solve or question to answer, the educational researcher has different approaches from which to choose depending on the research problem to be addressed.

Originally research in education was focused on answering specific questions with quantitative data. Over time qualitative research practices from Sociology, Anthropology and Psychology began to present opportunities for in depth analysis where statistical methods alone would not be sufficient to “investigate topics in all their complexity, in context” and to “understand(ing) behavior from the subject’s own frame of reference” (Bogden & Biklen, 2003, p2). Qualitative research not only provides detailed information about the subject under study in its natural setting but it also presents the opportunity to investigate and describe interactions between subject and other parties or systems (Cresswell, 2003). Researchers gather “soft” data (e.g. descriptions of people, places and conversations), in an attempt to answer broad and general questions about situations where relatively little is known or needs further clarification (Bogden & Biklen, 2003, p2).

The most “deliberate” aspect of this type of research is the site and number of individuals which are purposefully selected so that the researcher can better understand

the central phenomenon around which the study takes place and describe the themes/issues that surface (Anderson, 2002; Creswell, 2005). Since the qualitative researcher does not know the specific variables, he/she needs to first explore the central phenomenon (i.e. process, concept) in order to interpret the meaning of the processes and the inherent changes that lead to the outcomes (Gillham, 2000).

To date both qualitative and quantitative research methods, when executed with rigor and respecting ethical limits, are accepted as viable approaches in answering the questions/problems in the field of education. In fact many times the techniques typically used to gather and analyze data from one research method are used to round out and support techniques typically used in the other

“This distinction between quantitative and qualitative methods is a matter of emphasis – for both are mixtures. In each ethnographic or naturalistic or phenomenological or hermeneutic or holistic study (i.e. in each qualitative study), enumeration and recognition of differences-in-amount have prominent places. And in each statistical survey and controlled experiment (i.e. each quantitative study), natural-language description and researcher interpretation are important.” (Stake, 1995, p36)

Choosing Case Study.

John Dewey taught us that “the ultimate aim of research is the study of human experience” (Wood, 2000, p.1) and, although “stories” about the realities of teaching are not always accepted as scientific, they do describe complexities of teaching and offer “experiential understanding” which other data alone can only assume (Shank, 2002; Stake, 1995).

The literature tells us that the application of case study as a qualitative research strategy is very effective for describing real life experiences and examining complex issues while placing emphasis on a limited number of events, issues, programs, etc.,

within contexts that can contribute and/or build on existing research (Bassey, 1999; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Gillham, 2000; Yin, 2003; Yin, 2004; Creswell, 2005). John Dewey felt that by understanding individual history and past experiences we contribute to future experiences (Berube, 2000). Researchers from many disciplines use the case study method for different purposes including to

- a) produce new, build upon or dispute or challenge existing theories,
- b) provide an explanation or a basis for solutions to situations and
- c) explore or describe objects or phenomenon.

Case studies are a way of reporting individual experience and human interaction. They present investigators/researchers with the opportunity to answer pertinent questions and create learning that can be applied to future actions. Participants and audiences outside of the study also benefit from the information presented and can reflect and draw their own conclusions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

To ensure that the parameters of the research methodology were clear and consistently applied throughout this research effort, I reviewed several texts and articles on the meaning of case and case study. In doing so I found that respected researchers and educators in the fields of sociology, anthropology, psychology, medicine, law and education are very careful when they define what 'case study' or even 'the case' entails. This leaves room for different interpretations depending on background and experience of the author (Bassey, 1999, p35). So for the purpose of clarity and direction for this research effort, I have chosen the definition of "case study" as proposed by Robert K. Yin and Bill Gillham. By scaffolding the definitions outlined by these respected educational researchers who are recognized for their work with qualitative case studies, I am able to

more specifically delineate the parameters of the research methodology (i.e. selection of the case, access to data and data collection) and what this work can achieve/deliver (i.e., data analysis, reporting and contribution to the field).

According to Robert K. Yin,

“Case study research...is appropriate when investigators desire to

- a) define topics broadly not narrowly,
- b) cover contextual conditions and not just the phenomenon of study, and
- c) rely on multiple and not singular sources of evidence” to attempt to answer questions of “how and why” (Yin, 1993, pxi).

Gillham (2000, p1) takes this further and states that “case study” is the investigation of a case where case is defined by

“a unit of human activity (such as an individual or group, institution or community) embedded in the real world; which can only be studied or understood in context; which exists in the here and now; that merges in with its context so that precise boundaries are difficult to draw”.

The intent of the case study is to answer specific research questions about the unit of activity, applying different sources and types of evidence inherent in the setting of the case without necessarily having a “priori (of) theoretical notions” at the outset of the investigation. This differs from other research strategies in that the phenomenon or activity under investigation is studied in its context with a variety of variables present. There is no isolation or attempt to control variables as we see with experiments or surveys. The questions themselves become more clearly defined through the data collection process as evidence from the case setting is abstracted and collated to obtain the best possible answers to the research question(s) (Gillham, 2000).

The case study strategy requires discipline in not only staying focused on the topic of research, but also being skilled in good interviewing practices (including listening while being sensitive to bias), project management (including organization of

record keeping) and flexibility to deal with unexpected and unplanned discoveries (Yin, 1984). The ability to optimize the advantages offered by this method of research and address the challenges is what lends credibility and value to case study work.

Advantages and challenges of the case study approach. The following table summarizes the advantages of this approach for the research effort and explains how the features of the case study method were optimized.

Table 2-1 Advantages using Case Study Approach

Advantages	Optimization of Approach
<p>Data is “strong in reality” – “the case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events – such as individual life cycles, organizational and managerial processes....” (Yin, 1984, p14).</p>	<p>Observing the “work sessions” between the student intern and faculty members developing their lesson plans and reflecting on what they would need to do differently in the new environment as opposed to hearing about it afterwards presents the most robust form of data collection for this study.</p>
<p>Case studies can represent different perspectives or sides to a situation. Information captured through a variety of sources can substantiate alternate interpretations. At the same time the opportunity to question and challenge these interpretations increases the potential for understanding by different audiences.</p>	<p>Debriefing sessions with VHP administrators and faculty members presented the opportunity to cross-verify observations and validate interpretations.</p>
<p>Begin in “action” and contribute to it (Yin, 1984).</p>	<p>The role of participant observer by definition presents the opportunity to “contribute” to the research environment. Especially if the participants of the research invite you to work with them in their setting and see first hand both their concerns and their satisfaction.</p>

Advantages	Optimization of Approach
Data can be maintained in an archive for future re-interpretation	The filing and recording of the data as well as the survey presentations, summaries and final reports are available for review at any time. In fact creating a storyline allowed me to revisit the events of the pilot project as if they were yesterday but through different eyes.
Case study research is unique with a capacity to “understand complexity in particular contexts” (Simons, 1996 as quoted by Bassey, 1999, p.36)	“Feeling” the pressure and worries of the VHP participants as they worked towards the launch date, given certain restrictions and balancing all other responsibilities gave direct insights to the complexity of what faculty experienced in the development of the hybrid online courses.
Case study approach allows for flexibility when there is a need to shift focus based on themes that arise during data collection and analysis.	The plan for each of the work sessions with faculty depended on progress made during previous sessions and/or the issues/challenges that had arisen in the mean time. Action plans were agreed to but often needed to be altered to adjust to changing needs.

Just as with any research strategy, the investigation of a case in its context raises questions, which left unaddressed, can challenge the value and credibility of the resulting case study. Table 2 -2 entitled Issues/Challenges in the Case Study Approach that follows identifies the potential hurdles encountered when applying the case study method to research. The manner in which these hurdles are addressed can either contribute to the reliability and validity of the case, or weaken its position as a credible source of data towards the field of research

Table 2-2 Issues/Challenges in Case Study Approach

Issues/Challenges	Addressing The Challenge
<p>Case studies should only be used in an exploratory capacity.</p>	<p>The case study approach lends itself well to clarifying and improving the understanding of educational action(s). At the same time it allows for “feedback of information which can guide revision and refinement of action” (Stenhouse, 1985 as quoted by Bassey, 1999, p.28). This ability to constantly adjust the focus is often argued to be a weakness of the research strategy. When ironically it is the adaptability of the method that allows the researcher to get close to events with potential for deeper insights.</p>
<p>The ability for the investigator/researcher to remain objective especially during the participative observation aspect of data collection. For the audience or the “receiver” of the case study the question of reliability and interpretation is always evident.</p>	<p>“The product of a good case study is ‘insight’...” (Gerring, 2007, p7) It can well be understood that the intense exposure that the investigator/researcher has to have in order to be able to surface issues/findings will possibly bias his/her interpretation of the case in its context. However the investigator has variety of tools to obtain data, which almost forces a self-audit. The investigator not only questions participants, but his/her own observations. In addition the availability of another party (such as the student intern) can challenge the “observer effect” otherwise experienced by the individual observer.</p>
<p>Difficulty of generalizing from a single case - a small number of cases are unlikely to offer grounds for establishing reliability or widely applicable findings</p>	<p>“the case study presents an opportunity for both unique and universal understanding” (Simons, 1996 as quoted by Bassey, 1999 p36). Previous research investigating the “real life experience” of online instruction have effectively used the case study approach to demonstrate the mechanics of the change process as a way to help prepare other organizations with similar ideals and objectives.</p>

Issues/Challenges	Addressing The Challenge
<p>By the time case studies are published the experiences and lessons that they describe are most likely outdated or no longer an issue for the subjects or at the site around which the case study was developed.</p>	<p>Case study results relate directly to the common readers everyday experiences and facilitate an understanding of complex real-life situations. For example, the challenges of dealing with change are no less difficult for an individual or group because someone else has experienced a similar difficulty. However information about why some aspects worked and others didn't encourages alternative strategies and informed decision making.</p>
<p>Case studies are considered cumbersome to do for the researcher, because of the time commitment and disentanglement of data involved.</p>	<p>Yes, I can certainly attest to the fact that case studies can be complex because of multiple sources of data but also because there may be multiple cases within a study which involves a large amount of data analysis. However the great benefit of case study is that because it engages different sources of data, triangulation of findings is almost natural. And through the different sources of input further questions are generated which help to unravel the unit(s) under study.</p>
<p>Capturing the data and representing it in a way that is inconsistent with the objective of the case study (e.g., evaluative, educational or action research)</p>	<p>A data collection and categorizing plan helps to keep data in a manageable form and facilitates verification against original objectives. If as a result of new information the focus of the study needs to shift, the documented plan and existing data provide history to explain the change. In addition theoretical propositions provide a filter against which to check whether sufficient or insufficient data has been collected (Yin, 1984).</p>

This is not to say that the case study approach to research is a superior or exclusive strategy for conducting educational qualitative research. In fact, depending on the situation any combination of a variety of strategies can be used to meet the investigative objectives. However once investigators/researchers do decide to use the

case study approach they need to outline their strategy (i.e. examine the propositions of the study – theory related to the subject, determine the unit of analysis, “the case” – whether single or multiple-cases, create a plan for data collection, including the protocol for access to the setting/participants and establish a preliminary framework for analysis and reporting of the data, including practices for validation and reliability of the data/report).

Parameters of the Research

The Unit of Analysis – What is the Case?

Taking the case study approach to research is not possible without first answering the question ‘What is the case?’ The inability on the part of the investigator/researcher to answer this question will more than likely result in ‘scope creep’ or in layman’s terms, a study that has no limits and for which the focus expands beyond defined parameters. The data collection process could result in gathering a deluge of information, from so many perspectives, that it becomes unmanageable and limits the ability to generalize any findings. It is for this reason that even with the inherent flexibility of the case study approach, a sketch of the boundaries of the study should be established with the unit of analysis identified at least tentatively (Yin, 1993)

Although the research methodology for single- or multiple-case designs is the same (Yin, 1984), researchers need to decide which of these to apply. Single cases are typically either “critical” (testing a recognized and accepted theory), or “extremely unique” or revealing a phenomenon previously not accessible for investigation/observation. They can be “holistic” - global or “embedded” –with logical “sub-units”. Multiple-case studies, on the other hand, are used when a study contains

more than a single case and/or replication is the objective of the research. As is the case with single-case studies, multiple-case studies can either be holistic or embedded.

The Case in Point.

This particular case study is a single-embedded study. The ‘case’ is the first year of a pilot project to develop and implement hybrid online versions of general education courses traditionally taught in a face-to-face, in class environment. at an English language CEGEP. There are also “embedded” sub-units in the case which involve two members of the administration that supported the VHP, the four faculty members willing to participate and the feedback received from the students enrolled in the online courses once they were launched.

Research Site and Participants:

This pilot project of hybrid online courses originally delivered in a face-to-face environment, was purposefully selected because it would help to answer questions of the “how” and “why” (Yin, 1993) of implementing an online program and “expand” the understanding of the online teaching experience at the college level (Bogden & Biklen, 2003; Cresswell, 2005). The online initiative at Vanier College was selected for this research effort because:

- a) there were no other pilot projects of this type underway at the CEGEP level
- b) accessibility – the pilot project administration was seeking assistance, contacts had already been established and the campus was geographically well situated minimizing travel expense.
- c) Timing – work on the pilot project was just beginning.

Permission and Access to Site and Sample.

Access to the VHP and introduction to the administrators participating in the project was facilitated by Dr. R. Schmid and Dr. R. Bernard of Concordia University, who had already established relationships at the college in support of an internship assignment for the Educational Technology Department. After presenting my research interests I was granted access as a “participant-observer” alongside the student intern under the approval obtained through Concordia’s SPF UH2004-034.

In compliance with Concordia’s protocol for Research Involving Human Subjects, all subjects of the research effort (e.g. pilot faculty, administration, student intern and other VHP participants) were fully informed of the nature of my work, its objectives, scope and potential value towards the field of online education in general. Those who were asked to be part of the study were advised of their right to discontinue participating in the research study at any time. Consent forms were created in conjunction with the student intern (in order to avoid duplication), and approved by the researching University. (See Appendix A - Consent Form for Vanier Staff to Participate in Research, Appendix B - Consent Form for Vanier Faculty to Participate in Research and Appendix C - Consent Form for Research Team Members to Participate in Research for examples).

Participants in the study.

Consistent with the strategy to improve graduation rates in the CEGEP’s Career and Technology department, faculty from the institution’s General Education courses (e.g. English, French, Humanities – GECs) were canvassed and one faculty member from each of these departments was recruited. In addition one other faculty member from Sociology brought the total to four members. The criteria used to select faculty were their

department, personal interest and availability. Two out of the four recruited teachers had achieved tenure. Each of the four faculty members taught full course loads during the Fall 2005 and Winter 2006 semesters. They did not receive release time during either term to work on or facilitate the hybrid online courses, but the number of students per class was limited to 15 instead of the typical 35. Course design, development and implementation were executed along with their regular teaching responsibilities. Faculty had intellectual property rights over their course design and content. The hybrid online courses were launched in January 2006.

For the purpose of protecting their identities pseudonyms are given to the participants in the discussion that follows in Chapter 3. The two administrators most closely involved in the VHP effort are sometimes referred to as “champions”.

In addition because I am looking at the process of change and adoption of innovation by the members of the institution themselves and not attempting to define which courses are more suitable to online teaching and learning environments, the association of faculty and their specific courses is purposefully not defined.

Compensation

Online distance education initiatives are known to be costly and administrators had to demonstrate that effective online models could be developed with minimum investment and strain on resources (including technology). As such the VHP was initiated with a budget of \$12,000, most of which was spent on laptop computers for the participating faculty members who were also offered high speed internet connection at their residences. Two printers were supplied to two of the faculty members who did not already have one, and an additional \$1500 was spent to pay for copies and royalties of

films to be shown in one of the courses. Release time or additional financial compensation was not available.

Support

For support, faculty members participating in the VHP had access to two members of the CEGEP's administration, who were also the internal "champions" of the project. Two members of the CEGEP's Library and Information Technology Center (LITC) were assigned the role of "troubleshooter" for general computer issues and software support. A resource from the CEGEP's library had agreed to work with the teachers to design a research component for the students. A student intern from the Educational Technology Department of Concordia University was engaged to work with faculty and assist with the design of the hybrid online courses, depending on their needs and availability. And finally, there was myself, a Masters student in Ed. Studies, and Continuing Education instructor, who acted as participant-observer.

Table 2-3 Participants in the Pilot Project

	Stages of the Pilot Project			
Role/Title	Pilot Project Initiation	Conceptualization and Design	Implementation	Debriefing
Faculty	A	A	A	A
	B	B	B	B
	C	C	*	
	D	D**	D	D
Admin/Champions	I	I	I	I
	II	II	II	II
Tech Support **		Troubleshooter	Troubleshooter	
		Troubleshooter	Troubleshooter	
Library Resource	L	L	L	
Other		Intern	Intern	
		Researcher	Researcher	Researcher
* Insufficient enrollment for the course to continue				
** Faculty member declined to be part of research during the Design Stage				

With respect to course design, VHP faculty members were given open reign to create their hybrid online courses within the general requirements of the CEGEP's core curriculum, with the caveat that they would incorporate two instructional components, a library research component (to be designed by the campus librarian) and a grammar component, (to be developed by the teachers themselves). In addition faculty were to use the already installed FirstClass® Client (a class management and communications tool) and CAN-8® VirtuaLab™ (a language management module) for the delivery of the courses.

Timeline

At the time of this writing the VHP will have completed its third academic year. This case study focuses on the project during its first year or Phase I (see Table 2-4).

Faculty participating in the project were recruited in Spring of 2005. My involvement in the project ran from October, 2005 through and including May 2006.

Table 2 - 4 Timeline of my involvement in Phase I of the Pilot Project

PHASE I - VANIER CEGEP HYBRID ONLINE PILOT PROJECT

INTRODUCTION	CONCEPTUALIZATION and DESIGN		LAUNCH and IMPLEMENTATION	DEBRIEF
Spring 2005	Summer 2005	Fall 2005	Winter 2006	Spring 2006
Decision to initiate VHP		Laptops supplied to participating faculty	Courses launched in January	Completion of Courses in May
Budget assigned		Faculty develop Hybrid Online Courses	Courses are implemented	Lessons learned recorded
Faculty members recruited		Introduction of Student Intern	Student Surveys conducted	Presentation to Administration
		Introduction of Researcher	Results of Student Surveys Presented	Final Survey Results

Data Collection

Data for this research effort was collected through observations, including participant-observations, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, surveys, documentation obtained from CEGEP personnel directly or via college web-site at www.vaniercollege.qc.ca and debriefing sessions with the pilot project participants (i.e. faculty and administrators) and the student intern.

Although debriefing sessions were held between myself and the student intern on general pilot project developments and progress, we each maintained our own research file and documentation, including personal observations, working logs and spreadsheets. Therefore the following description of data collection and analysis techniques applies to my own practices, except where they were jointly developed and administered such as faculty questionnaires and student surveys. Semi-structured interviews were coordinated with the student intern. Table 2-5 below summarizes the sources for the data.

Table 2-5 Summary of Data Sources and Tools

Source	Description	Timing	Validation
General Project Outline and Progress Schedule	Self-developed project plan with Action and Targets for Completion based on known parameters of pilot project. Modified bi-weekly or as changes occurred	Oct 2005 – May 2006	Working log and catalogue of data chronologically maintained in a hard copy binder and backed up electronically
Observation Template Appendix E	Personal observations of meetings and group working sessions. Observations were recorded in a notebook, reviewed and then transcribed to either an Observation Form or Working Log	Oct 2005 – May 2006	Follow up discussions with pilot project participants to seek clarification. Interviews to gain greater insight on aspects
Working Log Appendix F	Notes on work sessions, project updates, personal reflections and questions	Oct 2005 – May 2006	Catalogue of data, debriefing with pilot project participants, research supervisor

Source	Description	Timing	Validation
Semi-structured Interview Template Appendix G	Interview schedules; some interviews recorded and transcribed, others documented with notes. Interview questions coordinated with student intern.	Oct 2005 – May 2006	Follow up discussions with pilot project participants
Faculty Questionnaires Appendix H and Appendix I	Originating from surveys drawing from Concordia's CSLP Technology Implementation Questionnaire and Dr. Kristen Betts' (1998) survey on Factors that Motivate and Inhibit Faculty Participation in Online Distance Education. Questionnaires jointly developed and administered with the student intern.	1st - Concept and Design Stage 2nd - Implementation Stage	Follow up discussions with pilot project participants
Student Surveys Appendix J, K and L	Three rounds (R1, R2 & R3) of student surveys were developed and administered during the Implementation Stage of the pilot project (January, 2006 – May, 2006). Two rounds were paper based and one round was web-based. Surveys jointly developed and administered with the student intern.	Feb, April and May 2006	Repeat certain questions to track changes in perception and capture trends
Debriefing with Student Intern	Intermittent debriefing sessions were held following interviews, work sessions or meetings.	Oct 2005 – May 2006	Follow up discussions with pilot project participants
Debriefing with Administration	Update meetings were held with the hybrid online pilot project administrators.	Oct 2005 - May 2007	Follow up discussions with pilot project participants
Documentation	Faculty lesson plans, web-site schematics, CEGEP Strategic Plan and Academic Success Plan, Academic Council Meeting minutes, MELS Strategic Plan 2000-2003, Pilot Project Proposal, college ethics policy, academic calendar, student admissions guide, campus layout, organizational charts and directories, etc.	Oct 2005 – May, 2006	Follow up discussions with pilot project participants
Debriefing Session with Faculty	Debriefing session with three of the four participating faculty members to high light lessons learned, needs and future actions.	End of the term May, 2006	Data from the session was immediately visible to faculty who could approve or disprove the outcome.
"Member Check" with Faculty and Admin	Met with three of the four faculty to review "the Case" as well as one Administrator. Second administrator was contacted via email with no response	May – August, 2008	Faculty provided feedback on draft copy of the observations.

Participant-Observation

In addition to pure observation, participative observation offers an important source of practical knowledge and experience.

“The overpowering validity of observation is that it is the most direct way of obtaining data. It is not what people have written on the topic (what they intend to do or should do)... It is what they actually do...” (Gillham, 2000, p46)

In my role as participative observer I was able to make suggestions re: ways to deliver the faculty members' ideas online. I was also able to get a close appreciation for the challenges encountered by the pilot project faculty and their administrators in the development and implementation of the courses.

For the majority of the meetings both the student intern and I were present. In instances when one of us was not present, we felt it benefited the pilot project to bring the other party up to speed on steps taken on the development of the courses and did so either via email messages or telephone conversations.

The presence of the student intern during the work sessions, meetings and interviews with pilot project faculty members and/or their administrators presented me with the opportunity to step back and observe the “work” involved in revisiting instructional strategies and dealing with what students need to do in the absence of the teacher in order to learn. Clarification of intentions, expectations, perceived challenges and issues was achieved either immediately following the work session/meeting or interview or as part of the review at the start of the next session.

The ability to participate in the experience has obvious benefits for the research strategy in terms of “real” data collection, however there is the concern about the

influence, or “observer effect” (i.e. the verbal and non-verbal input) the researcher(s), will have on the participants and in turn on the data collected (Gillham, 2000).

The participant-observation portion of the data collection process was only “structured” to the extent that there were select times when I could meet with the pilot project participants at their office on campus or pre-arranged meeting rooms, during three pilot project debriefing sessions, the launch of the hybrid online pilot project courses, and prior to the administration of Rounds 1 and 3 of the student surveys. I did not work with them while at home reflecting on ideas in front of their computer. But we did exchange email communications regarding suggestions for activities that students could use and ways to apply technology. I was able to observe the first day of classes when faculty met with students on campus when the hybrid online courses were launched. And I also observed and acted as participant observer during sessions with the pilot project administrators and/or meetings in their offices or conference room.

Observations were recorded in a notebook and then transcribed to either an Observation Schedule or recorded in my personal Working Log after the working session or meeting had ended. This allowed for further reflection and the development of additional questions as a result of rereading the text. In addition it allowed for the separation of action items that needed to be addressed either immediately or as part of a follow-up work session. The intent of recording my observations and general comments and questions in the same notebook as the actual design work, was to avoid distracting the participants who might concentrate on what I was taken notes on as opposed to working “in the moment”.

Work Sessions.

The work sessions during the conceptualization and design stage of the pilot project could run from 2-4 hrs weekly per faculty member, every other week or once per month depending on the needs and interest and the time available by pilot project faculty and/or administration. Face-to-face work sessions during the implementation stage of the pilot project were less frequent, but support continued with the help of teleconferences and emails.

The plan for each work session depended on the status and progress of the pilot project initiative, the aspects that were being explored and the issues/challenges that arose (Bogden & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 2005). Time spent with participating faculty focused on reviewing progress, brainstorming new ideas, developing the lesson plan further, and scheduling the next work session meeting. Notes were taken during all sessions. In addition, dialogue was captured with an audio recording device to the extent that was feasible given the logistics of the meeting area, the number of individuals in the group and comfort level of those to be recorded. Audio recordings were transcribed as they were heard and filed chronologically along with other communication and working log data in research binders.

Semi-structured Interviews

A key aspect for the validation of case study research as well a method for addressing criticism about researcher bias, is the collection of data using a variety of techniques. To triangulate and validate the observations of participative interaction, semi-structured interviews were conducted with faculty and administrators in the pilot project. Starting with general objectives for the interview sessions and allowing for flexibility to

focus on aspects and issues that were of concern/interest as expressed by each of the interviewees, the semi-structured interviews helped to capture insights on the transition from face-to-face instruction to online facilitation. The interview questions were created based on observations and information obtained from previous work sessions and/or interviews with the participants themselves, their pilot project colleagues, and/or meetings with the pilot project administration. The duration of the interviews ranged from 45 minutes to over an hour. Appointments were made in advance with the interviewee typically receiving copies of the questions/objectives prior to the meetings. In this manner they could plan their schedules accordingly and take time to reflect on their answers prior to the interview session. On two occasions telephone interviews were held.

Faculty Questionnaires

In order to reinforce the observations and supplement the results of interviews with faculty participating in the creation of the hybrid online course, two questionnaires were administered to pilot project faculty members during the conceptualization and design (see Appendix H – Hybrid/Blended Course Implementation Questionnaire – FR1), and implementation stages (see Appendix I – Hybrid/Blended Course Implementation Questionnaire – FR2). The objective of these questionnaires was to gauge faculty's comfort with the use of technology, capture perceptions of hybrid online teaching and learning and track changes in these perceptions. Permission to administer the questionnaires was covered under the consent forms which faculty signed. Faculty could decline to complete the questionnaires at any time.

Ideas for questions were taken from parts of an existing questionnaire (Technology Implementation Questionnaire - TIQ) currently in use by the Center for the Study of

Learning and Performance (CSLP) of Concordia University. The attractiveness of the CSLP questionnaire was that it had been used in other studies focusing on faculty motivation and the use of technology.

In addition, components of Dr. Kristen Betts' 1998 study on *Motivating and Inhibiting Factors of Faculty Participation in Online Distance Education* were used to create a list of possible motivators and inhibitors for participation in online distance education by CEGEP faculty. The inclusion of this aspect in the surveys was to further qualify the opinions and attitudes that may have influenced their hybrid online teaching experience.

The first of the questionnaires was administered to pilot project faculty members while they were in the midst of the designing the hybrid online courses (November, 2005). The second questionnaire was administered towards the end of the implementation stage (April 2006) in order to take a pulse of the "change" in perception that may or may not have occurred.

Consistent with the TIQ format, both questionnaires included questions pertaining to

- I. Self-Perception and Teaching Style and Preferences
- II. Integrating use of Computer Technology in Current In-Class Environment
- III. Views on Blended Learning
- IV. Perceived Computer Technology Knowledge

The second questionnaire included the list of factors that would motivate and inhibit faculty participation in online distance education, originating from Dr. Betts' 1998 study but modified to reflect conditions that pertain more specifically to the CEGEP structure.

Three of the four faculty members participating in the hybrid online pilot project completed the first questionnaire and three completed the second. Only two of the faculty members completed both questionnaires.

Surveys of Students in the Pilot Project Courses

To further evaluate pilot project progress and offer participating faculty feedback on content and delivery of their hybrid online courses, three rounds of student surveys were developed and administered during the implementation stage of the pilot project (January, 2006 – May, 2006). The basis for these surveys was also taken from the CSLP TIQ questionnaire (see above) and contained four sections with an option for pilot project faculty members to add their own course specific questions at the end (e.g., requesting feedback on a specific activity or assignment from the class).

- I. Information About the Student and Student Perceptions
- II. Evaluation of the Course Design and Content
- III. Evaluation of the Use of Technology and Technical Support
- IV. General Comments of Likes and Dislikes of Content and Delivery

Additional Comments Specific to your Class

Prior to its administration, each survey was reviewed by the pilot project participants to ensure their satisfaction with the content.

Students were given the option to decline participation without any negative implications. Consent forms were made available prior to the completion of the surveys. Surveys comprised of 70% multiple choice questions and 30% open-ended questions.

Surveys were administered to all three classes at the beginning of the term (Round 1), shortly after the mid-term examinations (Round 2) and at the end of the term (Round

3). With myself and the student intern acting as administrators of the survey, independent facilitation was possible, reinforcing confidentiality for the students. Two of the surveys (Round 1 and 3) were paper based and administered during the on-campus portion of the hybrid online courses. Students were handed the questionnaires during an on-campus class and were asked to return them during the next class when either I or the student intern would be available to collect them. This ensured that the students received the questionnaires, but missed students who either did not attend the first class when copies were distributed or the second, when they were collected. In an attempt to facilitate the distribution and collection of the surveys, and consistent with the spirit of online delivery, Round 2 of the questionnaires was made available electronically allowing students nine days to complete it. Students were sent an electronic invitation describing the purpose of the questionnaire and containing a direct link to the web-page. Two reminder invitations were sent to the students regarding the web-based version of the questionnaire. Electronic responses to the questionnaire were printed out for tabulation and filing purposes. In total thirty-seven questionnaires were distributed across the three pilot project courses during Round 1 of the survey process, thirty-five during Round 2 and twenty-six during Round 3.

Although student anonymity was assured both for recording and reporting purposes of all surveys, students could withdraw their participation at any time, even after having submitted a completed questionnaire. Only students in three of the classes out of the original four in the hybrid online pilot project participated in the surveys. The average hybrid online class size halfway through the term was 14.

Table 2 – 6 summarizes the administration, number of surveys distributed and the response rates for each of the three surveys. (See Appendix J – Student Survey R1, Appendix K – Student Survey R2 and Appendix L – Student Survey R3 for copies of Round 1, 2 and 3 of the questionnaires respectively).

Table 2-6 Administration and Response Rates of Student Surveys

Survey	Administered	Copies Distributed	No. of Copies Returned	Response Rate
Round 1	Feb. 6–10, 2006	37 Paper Copies	29	78%
Round 2	April 8–17 2006	35 Electronic Invites	20	57%
Round 3	May 15–19, 2006	26 Paper Copies	21	81%

Data was collated manually and entered into an excel spreadsheet that acted as the data base for the surveys, facilitating easy referencing and cross-class comparison. In addition the collection of data in the spread sheet format eased the creation of charts to help demonstrate various aspects and issues of online learning. Summary reports of the results of the surveys were created showing these aspects, trends and issues that could impact the success of this or any other online initiative. Since not all students responded to all three surveys, nor did they all remember the original codes used to demark their specific questionnaire copies, tracking of individual student changes from one round to another was not possible. However tracking of trends or changes in group perceptions, likes and dislikes and student recommendations for the improvement of the hybrid online courses was possible and was recorded. Feedback from the surveys was available to pilot

project faculty members to adjust or modify their online courses as they deemed appropriate during the course of the term. A final cumulative presentation of the student survey results was presented to the pilot project faculty team members and administration. The number of survey respondents was not sufficient to render broad statement about student participation in online distance courses, however it was sufficient to supply feedback on the pilot project efforts and to validate or challenge faculty and administrators' assumptions about online teaching and learning.

Debriefing with Student Intern

Intermittent debriefing sessions were held between the student intern and myself following interviews, work sessions or meetings with faculty and/or administrators involved in the pilot project. The discussions focused on pilot project progress or hurdles as well as the results of the faculty and student surveys. The debriefing sessions were held either face-to-face on the CEGEP campus, at a local coffee shop or over the phone. These could last anywhere from twenty minutes to 1 hour.

Documentation

For supporting documentation for the pilot project I had access to the original project justification, faculty lesson plans, web-site schematics, the library services outline, the colleges' Strategic Plan, Academic Success Plan, Academic Council meeting minutes, ethics policy, academic calendar, Student Admissions Guide, campus layout, organizational charts and directories and the MELS Strategic 2000-2003 Plan, etc. These proved useful not only for planning purposes and interviews with the pilot project participants, but to be able to place the hybrid online initiative in context.

Regular update sessions were scheduled with the pilot project administrators to review progress on the project and address administrative challenges/issues as they arose, such as the copyright issue of films scheduled for one of the courses.

Faculty Debriefing and Member Checks

A debriefing session was held at the conclusion of the first term (May 2006) that the courses were offered in a hybrid online format. Only three faculty members and I were present. Faculty discussed lessons learned and made recommendations for actions to be taken to continue the development of the project. Comments and ideas were transcribed “live” onto an excel spreadsheet and displayed in front of the group using an overhead digital projector. This allowed participants to clarify their comments and confirm that what they were saying was accurately conveyed. Copies of the final document were distributed to participating faculty and their administrators.

“*Member Check*”. I had the opportunity to meet with three of the four VHP faculty members and one of the administrators in May/June of 2008 to verify the accuracy of my observations. All three faculty members and the administrator were comfortable with the portrayal of their participation in the pilot project. I did not receive a response to my email communication from the fourth faculty member or the other administrator.

Data Analysis

Chronological Maintenance of Data

Initial recording of observations, results of working sessions, meetings, interviews and debriefing sessions was maintained in a standard 8 ½ x 11 notebook, and transcribed

to a working log. Interview or observation schedules/templates were used during semi-structured interviews and the results were re-typed for filing purposes. All field notes, working log sheets, completed interview and observation schedules/templates, questionnaire results, recorded interview transcriptions, email communications, project plan schedule, faculty lesson plans, web-site pages, and CEGEP documentation were filed chronologically as they occurred in two separate 3 inch binders with a back up for most of the data maintained electronically on my computer's hard drive which is backed up monthly. The first binder referred to as the Conceptualization and Design Stage Binder, contains data from events that occurred during October 2005 to December 2005. The second binder, referred to as the Implementation Stage Binder, contains data from events that occurred during January 2006 to May 2006. All documentation in these binders was maintained in chronological order with tabs separating each month. In this manner the development of the pilot project, as it evolved, was easily traceable and the ability to refer back to specific instances or issues to follow up with pilot project participants was facilitated.

Tape recorded interviews or work sessions were transcribed and paper copies were inserted into the Data Binders. Electronic copies were also maintained in a Working Document Research File on my desktop. Tapes are labeled and stored along with the research documents at my home office.

Data from student surveys are kept in a separate folder/binder grouped according to the different rounds of the survey (e.g. Round 1, 2 and 3) and then segregated for each class (i.e. English, French, and Humanities). The folder/binder is stored along with the other research documentation. Summary reports of the surveys, such as the ones

presented to the administrators and faculty of the pilot project were added to the Concept and Design and Implementation binders as they occurred.

The process of transcribing the original data from the notebooks and templates prompted further reflection and analysis and facilitated the creation of questions to be included in the next interview or addressed via the next work session or email inquiry. Each subsequent review of the data presented the opportunity for further reflection and a number of issues began to surface. For example the amount of time it actually takes to create an online course, the difficulty choosing activities that best demonstrate concepts while engaging the student or the type of media or software to use. These led to questions about how to balance pedagogy and technology, challenges that faculty and their administrators tried to overcome prior to the launch of the online courses.

Classification of Data

As the pilot project research study evolved, and notes and documentation accumulated and were reviewed in the binders, potential issues (such as the selection of technical tools or student orientation to online studying) and notable aspects (such as the teachers were the “authors of their own work” and had intellectual property rights) were color tagged and numbered. For instance issues/aspects related to teaching and learning were marked with yellow tags. Those related to technology were marked with green tags and those related to institutional protocol, policy and procedure were marked with orange tags. A brief description of each issues/aspect was then entered as an individual line item in an excel spreadsheet, including the tag number, the source (i.e. where to find further detail), reflections and when available, references to research literature.

Reviewing and asking questions about these issues/aspects of the pilot project was the first pass analysis and initial labels such as policy, course guidelines, teacher confidence with technology, teacher support, choice of tools, study aids, time management aids, training for online learning, available resources, etc., were inserted in an adjacent column. As the inventory of data collected in the spreadsheet increased, repeated or similar issues became evident. A filter function applied to the labels column in the spreadsheet, allowed for the grouping of similar issues. These groups were then assigned category names with sub-categories (often taken from the initial labels) helping to delineate aspects/issues within the larger category groups. The process of filtering and grouping issues into categories was the 2nd pass analysis and led to 13 categories drilling down to 36 subcategories covering a total of 321 line entries. Each category and sub-category combination was reviewed to weed out duplication and entries that did not contribute to the understanding of the case, but may have been entered as a reflection. As groups were formed the labeling of categories and sub-categories was modified based on the key issue that the data reinforced. For example the sub-category "study aids" fell under "training for online learning" or "choice of activities" depending on whether or not the category was Student Support or Course Design. Table 2-7 entitled VHP Aspects/Issues and Categories on the pages that follow shows an example of some of the issues, reflections/thoughts and categories in the data base after several passes. The table provides the Source where the data was collected, whether there is an issue, a reflection, links to the literature and then the categories.

This process was repeated five times and resulted in 5 high level categories and 18 sub-categories under the following general headers:

1. Strategy towards Change (STC) – e.g., Creation of the pilot project, project parameters, leadership style, etc.
2. Motivation for Innovation (MFI) – e.g., Reasons for participation for faculty and administrators, factors that influence participation
3. Perception of Online Distance Education (PER) - i.e., Role perceptions of faculty and students
4. Participation in Online Distance Education (PODE)– e.g., Use of technology, application of tools, course design, class management, workload and time management
5. Capacity for Change (CFC) – i.e., Long-term needs, resources, etc.

These headers provide the focus for the discussion of findings that follow in Chapter three.

Bonus:

In addition to analysis of the data base, the writing of “the case”– the re-creation of the pilot project –reinforced issues and provided further insights. Individually the issues in the data base are interesting because they either raise questions about or offer potential solutions to specific aspects of hybrid or 100% online distance education. When combined, they high-light the multi-dimensional and inter-related nature of this type of innovation and provide richer insights of the findings and answers to the research question (Gilham, 2000; Yin, 2003).

Table 2-7 VHP Issues/Aspects and Categories

**VANIER CEGEP HYBRID ONLINE PILOT PROJECT-
CONCEPTUALIZATION and DESIGN**

Source	Issues	Thoughts?	Lit/Res Other	Category	Sub- category
Working Log & Observati on Notes, Oct. 21, 2005	Does CAN-8® suit the needs of all the teachers? It is a language learning module. If teachers are the "authors of their work" and no-one is going to tell them how to go about teaching, what about the use of CAN-8?	Does it make sense for all the courses? Tools should be selected to enhance learning. Will it be another technical "handout" that will overload and overwhelm the students?	Conrad & Donaldson, 2004	PODE Participation	Course Design - choice of tools
Working Log, Oct. 31st, 2005 Sophie Interview notes	Sophie's lesson plan contains a lot of activities. The initial response to "absence from the classroom" seems to be adding more activities and exercises for students to complete.	Part of online learning is that students are encouraged to reflect on what they are reading and producing as work...less is more so to speak. How can teachers choose the best and right number of activities to achieve the course objectives?	Harasim, Hiltz et al, 1995; Paloff & Pratt, 2001; Macdonald, 2006	PODE Participation	Course Design - choice of activities
Interview Transcript Carol, Dec. 19, 2005	Carol's attitude is that the online course offers the students the need to think more. She believes that in-class students tend to depend largely on teachers' lectures. Whereas the online students will need to depend more on their text and their own instigation to work.	The skills to study online are not necessarily intuitive. Students need help to learn the independent study skills that are important for successful online learning.	White & Baker, 2004; Macdonald, 2006; Paloff & Pratt, 2007	PER Perception	Student as learner

**VANIER CEGEP HYBRID ONLINE PILOT PROJECT-
CONCEPTUALIZATION and DESIGN**

Source	Issues	Thoughts?	Lit/Res Other	Category	Sub- category
Interview w/ Chris, Mar. 17, 2006	The course involves more than teaching. The “writing” part of the course takes more time than in a f2f class. “Emails are fast and must be responded to in a clear and articulate manner. It takes time sometimes before a question is clear enough so that the answer makes sense and even then you are not sure.”	In addition to the extra hours needed to develop the online courses, teachers find themselves spending a lot of time interacting with students “outside” of the class hours giving explanations, sending reminders on deadlines, and helping students become independent learners.	Paloff & Pratt, 2001; Paloff & Pratt, 2007; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008	PODE Participation	Student Interaction – planning and time management

CHAPTER 3

The Case

Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings in the case of the Vanier Hybrid Pilot Project. The first few pages introduce the factors which contributed to the initiation of the pilot project and provide context for the setting of the case (i.e., the “how” and “why”). Since this report will also benefit audiences outside of Québec who may not be familiar with the CEGEP system, this section begins with a brief explanation of the purpose and types of programs offered by CEGEPs.

CEGEPs and Strategic Targets

CEGEPs (the French acronym for Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel - meaning College of General and Professional Education) are community-style public colleges created in the late 1960's, under Bill 21³. Unique to the province of Québec, Canada, the purpose of the CEGEP concept is to provide students with an opportunity to choose whether they want to continue post-secondary studies in university or to pursue a technical profession (e.g., Architectural Technology, Nursing, Building Engineering Technology and Computer Science).

Under the jurisdiction of the provincial Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (translation – Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports - MELS), CEGEPs

³ The Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education in the Province of Québec (Parent Report) released in the 1960s proposed the establishment of a level of studies beyond high school, 2 or 3 years in length and complete in itself, and clearly distinct from both secondary schooling and university education. Canadian Encyclopedia statistics for 2006 show 48 public and privately subsidized CEGEPs, employing approximately 13,000 teachers, teaching 237,000 students. Vanier College where the case takes place, is one of five English language CEGEPs. At the time of this writing there were over ten, two-year pre-university programs and fifteen, three-year technical/professional programs engaging 400 faculty members who taught approximately 5700 students (Vanier College 2006-2007 Catalogue: Guide to Students).

must meet specific goals and guidelines in such areas as Academic Success and Completion of Schooling, Program Relevancy and Preparation for Labor Force and Lifelong Learning. The degree to which a CEGEP is successful in achieving the objectives ultimately affects their ranking vis-à-vis other CEGEPs, the funding they receive and their long term growth as an institution. For example in 2001 the MELS set a target for completion of schooling and graduation for the 2007-2008 academic year of 65-70%. This means that by 2008 CEGEPs should be reporting 65-70% of their full-time students as graduating within the “prescribed time” (i.e., 2 years for most pre-university programs and 3 years for most technical programs).

Another area where institutions are expected to focus is the continued development and updating of skills and qualifications to help individuals “keep pace with advances in research and technology” (MEQ, Strategic Plan 2000-2003, p. 13). Furthermore the programs offered should be “relevant to the realities of today’s world” so that they can truly help to prepare students for success in the labour market (MEQ, Strategic Plan 2000-2003, p.17).

Performance versus Targets.

Part of the MELS coordinated planning process requires that colleges track and report on progress versus the targets set by the MELS. In 2003/2004 administrators in the college’s Career and Technology department determined that 60% of non-pre-university 3 year program students were “out of phase” by their fifth semester by 1 – 7 seven courses (i.e. they had fallen behind the ‘prescribed’ schedule in which to graduate). For Vanier College, successful achievement of the 2007-2008 MELS target of 65-70% of

students being “in phase”, represented \$500,000-\$800,000 funding. Conversely, failure to meet the target could result in a cut of 7-8% of the college’s operating budget.

Analysis of the data on “out of phase” Vanier students showed that on average they were in good standing in their program. In fact several had received job offers through their internships even though they had not completed the credits required to graduate. The analysis also showed that the courses that the students predominantly delayed taking were the General Education Courses (GECs), in the disciplines of English, French and Humanities.

In order to graduate and receive their Diploma of Collegial Studies (DCS) - or as it is more commonly known Diplôme d’Études Collégiales (DEC) - students must successfully complete nine courses in these disciplines in addition to core courses in their field of interest. If students do not complete the GECs it is presumed they are missing key aspects of a well-rounded education. Furthermore they will not receive their diploma which can affect their ability to compete in the labor market in the future.

Statistics Canada data shows “that only forty-one out of 100 CEGEP students who ‘start college without delay’ complete their studies in the ‘prescribed time’.” (Vanier Position Paper, Forum on the Future of College Education, 2004, p.5) Obviously the issue of students being “out of phase” is not unique to Vanier College and incomplete schooling is an issue which needs to be addressed. The 2007 Statistics Canada report on Pan-Canadian Education Indicators showed that during the period of 2005/2006 over half of Canadian students aged 17-29 worked while attending school.

“Once they are 16 years old, students are not legally required to attend school. Students entering CEGEP have, for the first time, true options as to what they want to do with their time and lives, and students who are unsure of their career or educational

paths may not see the benefits of continuing in a demanding program at CEGEP. Many students work at least part time in addition to attending school, and this situation often leads to the inability to satisfactorily meet the demands of both their courses and work requirements.” (Vanier Position Paper, Forum on the Future of College Education, 2004, p4-5)

In addition to the financial implications and the negative impact on the college’s “track record” vis-à-vis other CEGEPs, students are not receiving the “complete” education which CEGEPs are prescribed to offer.

“A Modest Proposal”⁴ for a Solution

Looking for an innovative way to address the issue of low schooling completion rates in their Career and Technology Department, administrators proposed a pilot project of four hybrid online courses, one for each of the three GEC disciplines and one complementary. The project would use existing technology (e.g., First Class and CAN-8®VirtuaLab™ software) and IT resources. Faculty from the General Education disciplines would be recruited and provided with laptop computers and high speed internet connections. They would be responsible for their course design and content, assisted by a student intern from the Educational Technology Department of Concordia University.

The proposal for the hybrid online courses outlined a 70/30 mix where 70% of the class time is delivered online and 30% delivered on campus, balancing the benefits of in-class face-to-face instruction with the flexibility available through online environments. This ratio would also allow for a gradual adjustment to a different method for instruction and learning, while reducing required class “seat time” (Garnham & Kaleta, 2002; Young 2002). But most importantly, offering GECs online would give students access to a well-

⁴ A Modest Proposal was the title of original pilot project proposal presented by the administrators.

rounded education, help with the completion of credits needed to graduate and with their diplomas in hand strengthen their ability to compete in the labor market. Furthermore, the online courses could support the development of independent study skills for students and help them keep pace with advances in technology (e.g., improve computer literacy) as prescribed by the MELS strategic plan. The proposal was approved and the pilot project initiated.

A Model of Innovation Diffusion

The administrators or as I like to refer to them “the champions” (per Howell and Higgins’ 1990 definition of “pioneering individuals”) of the hybrid online initiative hoped that the outcome of the pilot project could result in a solution to help schooling completion rates and determine whether hybrid online courses could and should become a viable part of the institution’s long term academic strategy. If the “early adopters” (i.e. faculty who participated and were satisfied with the outcome) gave the hybrid online courses their approval, “near-peers” could be persuaded to further evaluate and develop the initiative. Not only could they become part of a pool of resources to support hybrid online teaching, but together they would form the critical mass (or majority) required to support the initiative on a larger scale (Rogers, 1995; Robinson, 2001). Even those who would delay participation or reject the innovation entirely would still experience growth and change due to the change in their surrounding environment and interaction with participating peers. As a Dean, who was in support of the project, expressed “An institution without innovation cannot grow. We have to be willing to take risks. We will try something. We will learn something.”

Sometimes organizations need to take a chance in order to learn about themselves and their capabilities, to continue to be good at what they do. Figure 3 -2 entitled Vanier’s Strategy towards Change, outlines the steps taken by administrators (“champions”) and VHP faculty (“early adopters”) towards a potential solution for improving the Academic Success Rate for the students and the CEGEP. It serves as a “summary” of the VHP plan interpreted through Rogers’ (1995) Model of Innovation Diffusion.

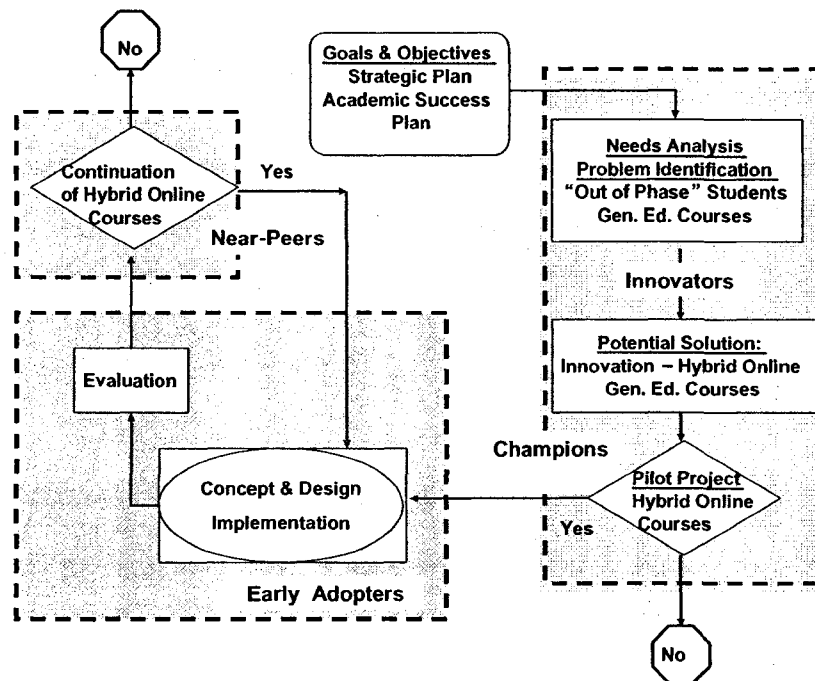


Figure 3-1 Vanier’s Strategy towards Change

Does Innovation “Fit” the Organization?

There is equal research to support the effectiveness of either face-to-face in-class learning environments or education facilitated in an online environment. The new debate involves, not whether, but when does it makes sense to introduce online distance education initiatives? What are the short term and long term implications of the decision to change? And specifically “What factors need to be considered by administrators and their faculty when trying to determine if and to what extent they should incorporate online distance education courses in their program(s)?”

In the pages that follow, I discuss my findings in the case of the Vanier Hybrid Online Pilot Project (VHP), the participating administrators and four faculty members, who have been given the pseudonyms Anne, Carol, Chris and Sophie to protect their identity.

There are five sections with the general headings Strategy towards Change, Motivation to Participate in Online Distance Education, Perception of Online Distance Education, Participation in Online Distance Education and Capacity for Change. Each section contains sub-categories that were developed during the data collection and analysis portion of the research.

Much of what you will read is consistent with what we already know about online teaching and learning environments. The importance of training and coaching for faculty and students for instance, are frequently reinforced in the literature and you will find the same in this report. However other findings lead us to the conclusion that not all aspects of online distance education are black and white and least of all predictable. The process of diffusion of innovation is unique for each organization and the individuals who

experience the process, however there is still value in understanding “what might happen when” in order to keep scaffolding the knowledge base. Interestingly enough this is also what one finds in “traditional” face-to-face educational models.

Discussion

Strategy towards Change

“If different results are expected, they will not be achieved by going through the same old processes.” Wedge, 2006 p.

Why a Pilot Project?

We have seen in the literature review that online initiatives require a clear vision, leadership, planning, and considerable investment in technology and resources to be effective. Certainly with a budget of \$12,000 the administrators at Vanier College could not expect to deliver a fully integrated program, especially when most of this money was spent on the laptop computers for the four participating faculty members. But they could, and in fact did, deliver a pilot project which provided the opportunity to test and evaluate the hybrid online concept given the existing infrastructure. Faculty and administrators would gain first hand knowledge about the conditions necessary for high quality online courses contributing to a better understanding of the college’s capacity for e-learning.

The upside of this approach is that if the pilot is successful, further evaluation could be justified. Perhaps even a grant could be secured. As one administrator commented, “Even if we fail, we succeed. If the VHP is not successful, perhaps it can be restructured to become successful.” On the other hand, the pilot project engaged faculty who developed the courses while carrying a full teaching workload, used existing technology

(which were not perceived as user friendly) and support resources. If it did not succeed, the pilot may leave the impression that online education is an inferior method of education delivery without ever having had all the variables in its favor. The idea of piloting an initiative is excellent but the use of limited resources for example, may hinder the experience for those involved and influence their interest to participate in the future. Furthermore it risks the quality of the outcome of the project which can hinder its continuation beyond the first year.

Sniffing Out "Skunkworks".

We have learned that the consideration that is given to the way innovation or change is introduced to an organization is critical to its adoption by the members of the organization. So if we want people to ultimately become part of the critical mass and momentum needed to institutionalize change, they should probably be involved in one form or another during the development process. This was not necessarily the case at Vanier College. Although internal research efforts to support teaching and learning excellence were encouraged by the Director General, VHP administrators did not formally solicit or involve either the union or other collegial functions or departments in the decision on whether to develop the hybrid online pilot. They wanted to test the idea of hybrid online courses without too much disruption to the institution and so created somewhat of a "skunkworks"⁵ operation in order to avoid delays that might affect the ability to meet the 2007/2008 Academic Success rate targets.

This observation raises two important points. First of all change is not possible without the willingness to take a chance to try something different (Fullan, 2003). But not

⁵ "an especially enriched environment that is designed to help a small group of individuals escape usual organizational procedures, so that innovation is encouraged" (Rogers, 1995, pg. 139).

everyone agrees on the same approach to address a particular need. Some members of an organization may decide that an innovation is not worth “testing” based on their existing beliefs and refuse to participate. Many opportunities for growth are lost due to fear of change. So it is not surprising that individuals and/or groups who are interested in changing the status quo will sometimes “bend the rules”. For example the VHP classes were assigned a limit of 15 students per class. This affects part-time versus full-time status and in turn salary and ultimately tenure. The administrators were able to make arrangements so that the smaller class size did not alter faculty status for the duration of their participation.

In order to achieve different results members of institutions must be willing to take risks. We might not have Apple’s Macintosh today, or laptop computers for that matter, if individuals’ were not willing to go outside of the accepted boundaries.

Of course, this should not be misconstrued as a proposal that members of institutions who are not comfortable with the status quo begin “skunkworks” in order to avoid organizational control channels intended to maintain institutional stability and order. What should be noted however is that this type of reaction may be a signal that the “usual bureaucratic structure of an organization is not very conducive to creating technological innovation” (Fullan, 1995, p. 139). This is a red flag and shows there may be limitations to the capacity for change.

The second point is that although it may sound counterintuitive, change thrives with conflict. Differences of opinion should not be considered barriers to innovation. Organizations that effectively manage change recognize that working with

polar opposites forces deeper exploration of innovation and ultimately leads to learning and growth.

“Assume that conflict and disagreement are not only inevitable but fundamental to successful change. Since all groups of people possess multiple realities, any collective change attempt will necessarily involve conflict. Smooth implementation is often a sign that not much is really changing.” (Fullan, 2007, p.123)

Shared vision or ownership while arguably important to any change initiative is not necessarily a pre-condition to success as it is part of an outcome (Fullan, 2007). It is the mix of different beliefs and experiences from diverse groups that provides the energy needed to propel change (Senge, 1999). Of course trying to involve the entire organization during the “evaluation” stage of the VHP would not be productive. Nonetheless circumventing differences of opinion does not preclude that the innovation will be adopted. In fact, quite often the opposite is true. Obtaining input from different groups that will ultimately be affected by the outcome of the initiative will help to mitigate roadblocks in the future. The challenge lies in determining who should be participating when. It’s not a simple process, but the upfront leg work will pay off in the long run when the original “champions” are no longer present and the sustenance of the initiative depends on the critical mass of supporters built up over time.

If We Build It Will They Come? – Addressing Schooling Completion Rates

The idea of offering hybrid online courses at Vanier College is itself not extraordinary. Innovation is often proposed as an alternative solution to a problem when the status quo does not satisfy the needs of the organization. If we consider statistics Canada 2005/2006 data that over half of Canadian students aged 17-29 worked while attending school, accessibility and flexibility are strong arguments for at least the

evaluation of online courses. After all reaching students has historically been the premise for distance education initiatives. But the idea is not without its challenges especially given the problem that it is intended to address, namely completion of schooling rates.

Ultimately the success of the project depended on students graduating in the “prescribed” time resulting in an improved Academic Success rate. Therefore, it is very important that students are motivated to enroll in the hybrid online versions of the GECs within the regular schedule of their program (e.g., three years for a Technology program). Studies have shown that students will take online courses if they are either already enrolled at the school and have conflicts in their schedule or have disabilities or want to get a head start in a particular program (Young, 2002; Hiltz & Shea, 2005). This supports the assumptions taken by the college administrators. But what if the students don’t see value in completing the credits? Or if they do, are not in a rush to do so? What incentive do they have to finish their course work in the “prescribed time”? For those that have already secured a job in their field of interest there is really no hurry. And given what we know about the discipline needed for independent study, they may not want to dedicate the time to complete their diploma. The bottom line is if students want to finish the required courses in order to receive their diploma, they will. But unless there is another incentive for them to graduate in the “prescribed time”, which may in fact involve internal and/or external policy changes and practices, the completion of schooling rate and Academic Success targets will be difficult to achieve.

The “unused solution” is a common predicament of change initiatives. In other words a process or program is developed for a specific purpose, yet it is never used for that purpose and is forgotten. If the hybrid online projects’ “raison d’être” is strictly to

improve completion of schooling rates, there is no guarantee that the project will survive long term. However the possibilities envisioned by the administrators, such as reaching students outside of the Montreal area or servicing International students may be just the kind of observable and measurable advantages that will benefit the institution and sustain the initiative. In order to continue innovation has to serve the purpose for which it was intended or offer a sufficiently attractive alternative previously not exploited.

Change Requires Flexibility, But How Much?

The administrators of the VHP decided that flexibility was key to the success of the initiative. Building on what they knew from years of working as teachers themselves, they took a decision to manage the VHP loosely at first, believing that faculty are professionals and will know what to do. “If they want help, they will ask for it. If they need tools they will ask for them.” Other than including a grammar and a library research component in their lesson plan and incorporating the existing FirstClass® platform and CAN-8® VirtuaLab™ software, there were no standards defined for the number of technical tools, or the layout of the course plan and so on. The freedom to create and develop the online courses was the same as the freedom faculty had to develop the courses that they traditionally deliver in a face-to-face environment. Faculty were to be the authors of their work and to manage their own development process.

My own project management experience told me there should have been a structured plan with milestones to be adhered to, and so on. But “command and control” was not a strategy that the administrators felt would be effective. As one of the administrators commented:

“The idea is to have flexibility when you start the course. And knowing teachers, how they’ve been teaching, you’re not going to get them to

come down and know that on the second week, the third hour of their class, they're teaching this. And there's always change so the flexibility is very important. "

Participating faculty had a full teaching schedule. Designing and developing the hybrid online courses was extra work and needed to be fit in whenever possible. As it was, by the time the hybrid online courses were launched in January, faculty had completed the first five to six weeks of content of the fifteen week term. They intended to incorporate the rest after receiving student feedback vis-à-vis the online design and content, could test the flow of the lessons and activities as the students moved from the face-to-face in-class environment to interacting online and gained confidence with the reliability of the technology.

In principle the concept makes sense and is actually what many teachers do in face-to-face classroom environments, adjusting to the needs and learning preferences of their students. The challenge lies in the independent nature of the online environments, where students like to plan their study strategy or get work done ahead of time. In fact, Round 2 of the surveys administered to students in the hybrid online classes, revealed that students did want to look ahead at what needed to be done for the term and found limited information.

The "too-tight/too-loose dilemma" is often encountered by leaders and initiators of innovation. On one hand, too much planning and structure limits the ability to explore and learn by making mistakes. Success may be achieved in the short term but participants do not stretch beyond their normal limits. On the other hand guidelines or directions that are too loose tend to dilute the objectives and often targets area missed because of competing priorities. The flexibility/freedom can also be a double-edged sword in that

faculty while creating their courses alone (despite reviewing their lesson plan and ideas for activities with the student intern) are in fact, alone in the process.

The literature on innovation informs us that the process of change is not always tidy and structured which speaks to why so many people are uncomfortable with change. Attempts at fitting a change process into a pre-determined structure or plan, is usually very difficult because there are multiple iterations of the process that occur before a satisfactory outcome is realized. The intentional flexibility of the VHP, may well have achieved greater progress in determining “what would happen if”, than had it been strictly controlled with deadlines. But not having the course structure defined in advance sends a message of uncertainty to students who already feel tentative in the new environment. Ideally faculty should be provided release time in order to plan and develop an online course, especially if they are new to the process.

Motivation to Participate in Online Distance Education

Administrators

Studies have shown us that administrators, faculty and students are motivated to participate in online distance environments for different reasons (Berg, 1998; Betts, 1998; Rockwell, et al, 1999; Quinn & Corry, 2002; Schifter, 2000, 2002). We’ve briefly seen in the Background section of this chapter, some of the external factors that contributed to administrators’ interest in hybrid online teaching and learning at Vanier College (e.g., MELS guidelines). The threat of reduction in available funding can be a strong catalyst for trying something different to address persistent problems faced by institutions. This fuels the perception that financial advantage is the only reason administrators consider

online initiatives and that pedagogy is secondary. The truth probably is that there is no primary or secondary reason. Broadly speaking the mission for academic institutions is to provide access and the means to secure a quality education. Certainly we've seen enough research to show us that if properly designed and managed, online environments do provide students access. Plus given what we know today about the costs of implementing an effective online program, it cannot be confused with a "get rich quick scheme".

We need to "get out of our own way" in order to see the larger picture. The VHP presented multiple directions for growth. Aside from providing a potential solution for the under performing school completion rates, the format of these courses could encourage independent learning strategies and increased computer literacy, contributing to student success academically and in the labor market. Success with the pilot project could lead to programs that support Vanier's efforts in assisting student populations situated outside of the major metropolitan centers and even in the international sector. Or even place the college in a leadership position relative to other English language CEGEPs with similar interests. The vision for the project presented numerous opportunities.

But without available financial resources institutions are limited in their ability to provide quality education environments, whether on-line or on-campus. And as much as it grates on us to admit it, without available funding even the status quo is non-sustainable in the long run. So were the administrators attracted by the potential financial gains if the hybrid online project succeeded? Probably as much they were motivated to operate a quality academic institution.

Faculty – The Promise of Technology

Before we can address the question of whether the availability of technology will motivate faculty participation in online distance education, we must first separate the influence that the availability of hardware may have on faculty wanting to “sign-up” from the lure of learning how to use the software. By hardware I am referring to computers, peripheral equipment such as scanners or printers, and personal agendas. By software I am referring to the various applications that direct the hardware to perform specific functions or tasks.

Research on factors that motivate faculty participation in online distance environments as documented by Betts (1998) and Schifter (2002) highlight financial compensation, release time, recognition and peer support as the more frequently cited extrinsic factors. More recently requests for technology devices such as laptop computers and personal digital agendas have joined this list (Parker, 2003).

Have Laptop Will Participate.

When asked whether or not the availability of the computers influenced their decision to participate in the VHP, all of the faculty members indicated “no”. Rather than an incentive or motivator, the laptops were seen as enablers to achieve increased proficiency with technology, allowing faculty to work whenever and wherever to develop the lesson plans and conduct their classes online. They were an important component of the technology learning curve. And their portability provided faculty with flexibility and being able to work “away from the office”. Ironically the technology that was intended to provide VHP faculty more freedom, eventually threatened to take it away. By providing

students access to faculty 24/7, faculty often found themselves tied to the computer responding to the frequent inquiries and requests for assistance from students.

But this was equipment faculty did not have to purchase and it could be used for personal exchanges and work. And in addition to the printers and reimbursements for the high speed internet service adds up to a cash value.

Herzberg's (1959) motivational theory reminds us that money is not actually a motivator as much as it is a de-motivator when it does not accompany additional recognition or advancement. Let's stretch this assumption to laptops (considering they have monetary value). Their motivational affect on faculty probably diminished as soon as the hours of extra work to develop the courses started to accumulate.

Rogers (1995) tells us that incentives may increase the rate of adoption of an innovation. However if the motivation to participate in innovation is based solely on receiving the incentive (e.g., a laptop computer with high speed internet connection) as opposed to the more intrinsic motivators such as developing new teaching skills and becoming comfortable with technology, then there is a lower likelihood of continued participation. Furthermore once the incentive becomes part of what is expected to sustain the innovation, its impact as an incentive is lost.

So does receiving a laptop computer motivate faculty to participate in online distance education initiatives? If we use the VHP as a gauge and consider the number of faculty that indicated they would continue developing their hybrid online courses after the first year, there's a 50% probability. Alternately, administrators might consider spending the funds for stipends and/or training sessions helping faculty with how to design online courses and/or optimize the use of technology.

Learning about Technology can be Motivating Depending on...

This brings us to the second part of the question, “does the opportunity to learn how to use technology motivate faculty participation?” The quick response is, “Yes, but it depends on two conditions.” The first is the level of expertise of the individual and the second, the perceived value of technology to be used. Let’s first consider the level of expertise. Faculty members who signed up for the VHP had no previous experience designing online courses or teaching in online environments. Each started out with different perceptions and levels of confidence regarding the use technology. But lack of proficiency with technology did not inhibit them. The experience and skills to be gained were an incentive for participation. For example Chris, one of the four faculty participants, saw the opportunity to deliver his course online and incorporate interactive learning objects as an exciting prospect. He already had some experience using technology but the prospect of learning about new applications that he could use to engage his students and help them construct meaning was part of the attraction to the VHP.

Another faculty member, Sophie was not as confident in using technology. The opportunity to learn the functions of different word processing applications, and how web-based learning objects could be applied to instruction was an intimidating yet exciting venture. She expressed that it was important for her to truly understand the functions of the technology that she would use. Not only to be able to make adjustments to the lesson plan when necessary, but also to be able to help her students.

Carol, on the other hand was interested in demonstrating that online instruction was not about “bells and whistles” but about providing students with opportunities to

collaborate and create meaning. And finally Anne who had never used word processing editing functions found herself intrigued by the capabilities of the software. She also had never used chat and was anxious to learn more about different ways to communicate with her students.

“Not knowing” is an inhibitor for participation in innovation for individuals who don’t like to get out of their comfort zone. It acts as a motivator for those that like a challenge. The faculty members of the VHP intentionally took themselves out of their comfort zone when they agreed to develop the hybrid online courses. They were largely motivated by a desire to acquire knowledge and experience and to be part of innovation. Participating in the VHP encouraged them to examine and “play” with technology. Through the development of their courses they became more confident with its use and curious about its possibilities. However, once a certain level of proficiency is achieved and unless there are other motivating factors, the drive to continue to learn about technology is not enough to sustain participation beyond the original commitment.

Faculty have different backgrounds, experiences, styles and beliefs. If they are not at least intrinsically motivated to participate in online distance education (that is, they are looking to learn new things or want to be part of innovation) the availability of extrinsic motivators will not sustain participation long term. Providing different incentives that have been identified as “meaningful” to faculty, will go a long way to encourage continued participation. The challenge is finding out what is “meaningful” versus what is the “perk of the season”.

It’s my course and I can choose ...the technology that I want to.... The second condition relative to technology that may influence whether faculty are motivated to

participate in online distance education initiatives is their perceived value of the technical platform or application to be used. Research (Betts, 1998; Schifter, 2000) tells us that the absence or availability of technology is not necessarily a strong motivator or inhibitor to participation in online distance education. However, the ability for faculty to give input to the tools that are available and to have confidence in the ability for that technology to adequately deliver and represent content does contribute to their level of motivation.

Faculty members participating in the VHP had been advised from the start that they were the “authors of their own work”. They were encouraged to be creative and develop their own personal design for their courses given the available technology which included the FirstClass® Client and Server (which could be used for email communication and the creation of a web-page) and the CAN-8®VirtuaLab™ language learning module. This was the technology that was available and for which there was on-campus support. Acquiring or developing new applications would be time consuming and cost prohibitive especially for a pilot project.

In the case of the CAN-8®VirtuaLab™ language module, faculty had difficulty trying to adapt its functionality to their lesson plan so that it served a useful purpose. Anne used the module for grammar exercises. Chris used the module extensively to incorporate weekly exercises and group discussions.

Sophie decided she would use it as an audio accompaniment to the written instructions for her weekly exercises, but then aborted this idea after the first week that the course went “live”. The time and effort involved for set up and logging on to the system just to hear the instructions did not offer any advantages for students or the

teacher. It only meant there were multiple applications to open at the same time, which could either cause technical lock-ups or create confusion.

Encouraging faculty involvement in the selection of courseware and technology to be used in their online courses helps to reduce the anxiety and struggles otherwise associated with innovation. Furthermore faculty know their subject matter. They might need assistance in searching for the appropriate software applications with which to create learning objects, but directing them to use software without considering the pedagogical advantages is counter productive and can only contribute to inhibiting participation. In the end faculty were not pleased that they had to find a way to incorporate the CAN-8®VirtualLab™ into their lesson plan. It was akin to telling faculty who teach in face-to-face classrooms that they have to use flip charts when describing their concepts in addition to using the overhead film or digital projectors or chalkboards. Flip charts work well for some types of lectures but not all.

It's an interesting dilemma. On one end of the spectrum if faculty are free to create their "individual look" and choose different software applications the ability to upgrade, service and maintain the applications may become unmanageable. Furthermore students would need to readjust each time they take an online course which adds to their learning curve. And finally quality standards and directives for course layouts that are consistent with the institution's mission may be difficult to enforce. However faculty will be very satisfied because they can develop their course exactly as they choose and have their own signature layout.

The other extreme involves a standardized template from which no-one deviates, providing uniformity and ease of maintenance. Once faculty and students learn how to

navigate the course site, they are up and running and the learning curve for each new course is significantly less. However, faculty are not all equally proficient in using technology and so the most basic template formats are often selected facilitating easy transfer and downloading of files and materials. This can result in the generation of electronic page turners.

Somewhere in the middle lies the possibility of a standard template that can be modified and enhanced with applications that faculty could choose based on course objectives, their instructional preferences and perceived student needs. The template and applications could be pre-approved by a panel of representatives (faculty and staff, and perhaps even students) based on criteria that meets the institutions' technical, pedagogical and budgetary considerations. Because there is some standardization, servicing the applications may require less resources and faculty and students spend less time learning how to use it and more time on course content.

In the case of the VHP faculty were directed towards using the available FirstClass® platform. Chris, one of the faculty members said that one of his challenges was “to have to work in a rigid technological environment that may not be the best...and have to stick to it, because ‘that is what we have and we want to test it’.” The FirstClass® platform was not perceived as user friendly and its limitations created frustrations for faculty who anticipated problems for their students. Ultimately, only one of the faculty members used the standard FirstClass® web function with folders identifying weekly lessons and activities, links to specific sites and chat and email function. The other three opted to use the Hibbits software (a pre-packaged template) which allowed for a little more creativity.

Faculty learned how to navigate within the template and exchanged ideas on ways to adapt the existing layout to the different courses. They designed a “front page” for their courses further defined with weekly lesson plans and links to other sources and activities. Given time and resources, they would have preferred to develop unique web designs, but the Hibbitts template functioned well enough for purposes of the VHP.

In a nutshell institutions exploring online initiatives need to balance their choice of technology (hardware, software) with pedagogical objectives and learning needs (as defined by faculty and students). Otherwise the focus of the initiative becomes one sided with either the capacity of technology or the inhibitions of faculty as the basis for decision making.

Perception of Online Distance Education

According to Rogers (1995) an innovation will ultimately be adopted if it is perceived as better than the status quo and does not conflict with existing values, experiences and needs of those by or for whom it is initiated. Relative to the VHP this means that participants (i.e., administrators, faculty and students) needed to perceive the online courses as being better (in terms of achieving their objectives), compatible (in terms of using the available technology) and not too complex and yet advantageous (to the extent that the online tools would enhance the learning experience), and result in at least as good “subject matter competence” levels for students.

Teachers’ Perceptions of Themselves.

One of the most difficult issues facing faculty participating in online environments is that their role as teachers has to change (Seel & Dijkstra, 2004). Not only

do they have to learn how to adjust to a new way of teaching, but they also need to coach their students through a new way of learning.

When the VHP faculty started out designing their hybrid online courses, they approached the lesson plans in the same way as when they created the face-to-face in class versions. The main difference had to do with finding and selecting online learning objects or techniques that could be used to demonstrate the course concepts and encourage student participation.

It was not until faculty actually “worked” the online lesson plan, putting themselves in the place of their students that they began to perceive the need to change their “traditional” roles as teachers. They went back to the basics, revisiting their course objectives and learner’s needs. They analyzed their original instructional strategies to see what needed to be different.

Sophie described how “loading the web-page” and entering activities while following the course proved helpful. She explained that as she went through this process, she asked herself “what do I really, at the end of the day, want to get out of the class...at the end of the day, what might make a difference so that they learn and understand the concepts?” She tried to put herself in the place of the student. After having spent a number of work sessions examining instructional goals and objectives for learning and struggling with how these can be achieved using different online techniques and activities turned to us and said:

“I’m a facilitator of knowledge. My course is about thinking. They need to learn how to critically think. They need to learn how to actively engage with the material. I want them to create knowledge. There is no cramming. It’s really a structure that we’re building. Can you teach actual thinking online? I’m certainly running into more barriers than if I was teaching in class.”

Her perception of her role as a teacher had changed and she realized that her approach to teaching had to shift in the new environment if she was going to be successful in helping students change their way of learning in the new environment.

“Making the transition to the online environment means developing new approaches to education and new skills in its delivery. It means engaging in self-reflection as we determine our own comfort level in turning over control of the learning process to students.” (Palloff & Pratt, 2001, p.35)

Anne saw the online environment as an opportunity to provide different resources for students' learning. When asked about the special differences between the online course that she taught and the same course given in a face-to-face environment she explained that she was re-thinking “how I am going to motivate them to learn while online.” The exercise of creating the online version of her course, forced her to sit back and re-examine old strategies. In a follow up discussion she shared “the classroom is just a physical boundary. It's what's happening in my head that I want to get in their head”.

It is a difficult transition from being the “director” of the educational process to being the “coordinator” or “facilitator”. Teaching in the online environment requires the ability to give up some control and predictability while anticipating student learning preferences and styles and creating activities in response to these.

“The ability to remain flexible and open to relinquish control are characteristics that make not only for successful instructors in this medium but for successful learners as well.”
(Palloff & Pratt, 2007, p. 124)

Chris shared that although he had read about the challenges of interacting with students online, he did not know what it really “felt” like until the hybrid online courses were executed. The “hands-on” experience, more than the process of “rethinking” the instructional approach, allowed for the difference to be truly understood.

Faculty who are new to online environments find themselves having to “rethink” their lesson plan. Where they might have gotten into a “routine” instructional approach, the new “teaching and learning space” forces them to go back to basics and question what they are doing as if they were teaching for the very first time. Reflecting on past practices and re-assessing objectives keeps instructional strategies fresh and results in an improved teaching and learning environment. But that also means having to “start again”, which is not always perceived as a positive and difficult to promote as an advantage at the outset.

Surprise! Students Are Not Always Independent Learners.

“ People think of students as the potential beneficiaries of change...They rarely think of students as *participants* in a process of change.” (Fullan, 2001, p.13)

In order to learn about what works and what needs to be improved about the hybrid online courses, surveys of the students attending the hybrid classes were conducted by the student intern and myself. These would provide faculty and administrators feedback on course design, content, facilitation techniques and the use of technology. Three surveys were created and administered sequentially over the course of the term to the students attending the classes as outlined in the procedural section of this study. From Round 1 (R1) of the surveys with 29 respondents, faculty were able to determine that 100% of the students had never taken an online course but that they all had internet connections and used their computers regularly. Over 60% of these students used the computer daily for non-gaming purposes.

The assumption that students would like the flexibility the online courses offered was confirmed as mostly true when 70% of the students that responded, selected the

hybrid online courses because of its time slot (Figure 3-2 VHP Student's Reason for Course Selection that follows).

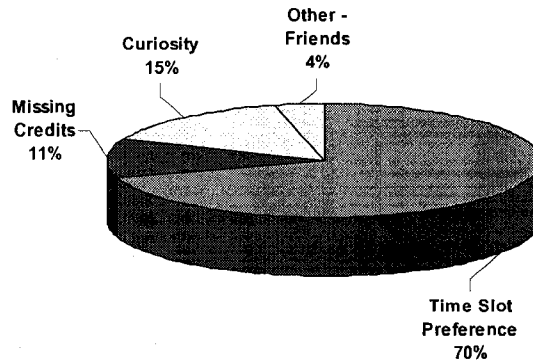


Figure 3-2 VHP Student's Reason for Course Selection (n=29)

Fifty-five percent of the students enrolled in the hybrid online courses were from the Careers (e.g. Early Childhood Education and Nursing) and Technology departments and 35% from Sciences, consistent with the priority set during registration (see Figure 3-3 VHP Student Field of Study (n=23) below). And seventy-eight percent of the students had a full, or close to full course load that semester.

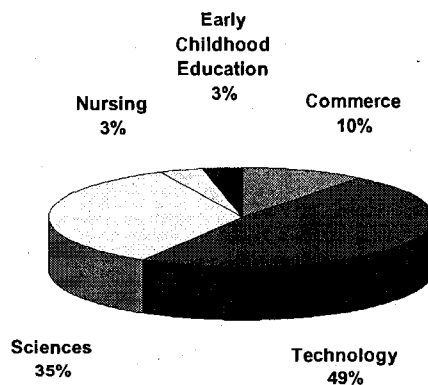


Figure 3-3 VHP Student Field of Study (n=29)

When asked about their beliefs regarding online learning in R1 of the surveys, 43% of the respondents (n = 28) predicted that they could learn just as easily online as they could in a traditional class. Fifty-five percent believed they were relatively good independent learners with 93% considering themselves good time managers. Interestingly enough, the students in these surveys that perceived themselves to be relatively good independent learners actually preferred more “hand-holding” from teachers and were not comfortable with the process of “discovery” so important to self-directed learning. This speaks to students’ interpretation of the meaning of “independent learner”. When asked what they did not like about the online course, responses from students included:

“I don’t really like not seeing my teacher very often. Also I do not really enjoy having the freedom of doing work on my own time because I end up being too lazy to do it.”

“The fact that I can’t interact with my teacher and teammates immediately. My questions can’t be answered right away.”

The follow-up Round 2 (R2) survey revealed students’ perceptions of themselves as independent learners had changed somewhat and as good time managers had changed significantly. Figure 3-4 Student Response for Learner Style and Time Management shows a decline in both students’ perceptions of themselves as independent learners and effective time managers. Presumably students are responding to “experiencing” the online environment and the expectations of them to take responsibility and participate in the learning process.

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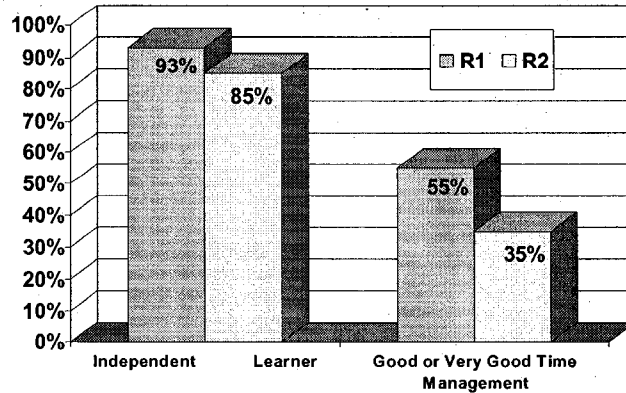


Figure 3-4 Student Responses for Learning Style and Time Management

Students that had predicted they would be good time managers most likely found that learning and interacting in an online environment took a little more time than they originally anticipated. Their open-ended comments suggested that they found the workload very heavy and they would prefer to have more instructions.

Very often students do not have “self-knowledge” or an accurate perception of their actual expertise with study practices (Flavell,1979) which causes them to falsely assess how well they will perform in a learning situation. A link to an online learning guide created by the student intern was available for all the VHP courses. It included tips on what to expect in online environments and best ways to prepare for studying in the new learning space. When asked if they referred to the guide, students indicated that they did not use it. Their perception of themselves as good independent learners precluded the need to search for further guidance in this area.

Also students sometimes believe that because they do not have to attend a “physical” classroom the online course is a “light” class and therefore they won’t have to work as hard. As one student in the R1 survey commented:

“It’s the same amount of work of any other _____ course, but we

have to do it alone, without lectures and explanations from the teachers.”

In response to what may have been a case of “mistaken identity” of this sort, Chris called an “emergency class meeting” on campus. He found that students were not participating in group activities and were having difficulty planning their work assignments. Sophie also held an “emergency meeting” on campus in lieu of time online, to help students with study practices, homework planning and scheduling and to reinforce what needed to be completed to achieve learning objectives. This is significant. Students do not instinctively know how to create a self-directed study process. After years of receiving prompting and reminders for when their assignments are due or hints on where to look for answers, students expect more of the same regardless of the learning space. In order to help students, Chris posted a homework schedule to remind students of upcoming assignments, due dates and other information that would help them complete their work.

Encouraging students and providing direction is important. But if students don't see a problem with their self-efficacy and self-management they will not take steps to improve these skills and will continue to rely on faculty to “hold their hands”. In anticipation of her students' need to be led, Carol planned to follow up frequently when assignments were due to ensure that they were handed in on time. This is illustrated by her comment:

“The issue will be on them being able to use a web-page, what they have to do every week and make sure they actually do it every week. I'll probably put in the stuff maybe a week in advance so they don't go farther than the rest of the class, too fast and as soon as the week is over, just withdraw it.”

Initially it makes sense to check in with students a little more while they adjust to the new environment. This provides “training wheels” of sorts. But eventually students need to be able to direct themselves. Part of the focus for faculty teaching online is to help students develop and fine tune independent, self-directed study habits. Otherwise they will continue to rely heavily on teachers for prompts regarding deadlines and hints on where to retrieve data important to their research as opposed to taking the initiative to conduct the search on their own. Failing this students often become frustrated, assume that they are not able to learn and withdraw.

If students can be provided assistance to develop the appropriate practices and habits (i.e., study skills, technical skills, time management and planning, etc.), they will be able to improve their own capacity for learning, their contributions to the online class will also be of higher quality and the likelihood of their continued participation increased.

Round 3 (R3) of the student surveys revealed that students found the subject matter in the online courses interesting. They enjoyed the ability to work from home and the online discussions. But they did not like the amount of work and reading to be done, unreliable team mates, lack of face-to-face interaction with both the teacher and classmates and the number of technical applications they needed to learn. Students liked the flexibility of not coming to campus for class, but they did not want to “pay the price” for the independent nature of the online environment. Note the contrast between (A)what students liked about the online course with (B)what the same student did not like about the online course:

A: “I don’t need to go to class and I can do everything on my own time.”

B: “That I am not able to see the teacher all the time”.

A: "We have more freedom."

B: "Less contact with the teacher."

A: "You don't have to go to class."

B: "If your teacher talks in front of me, I'll understand better."

Introductory sessions on what is involved with online learning could inform students on what to expect and help them determine if they are able to thrive in these types of environments. Furthermore students could benefit greatly from coaching on metacognitive strategies which would increase their capacity to learn regardless of the model of education delivery. These could be slated as orientation sessions or entry level courses for online programs.

Participation in Online Distance Education

Unexpected Rewards.

Often faculty that teach online learn new strategies that they then bring to their face-to-face classes. In addition to ideas that were generated through their "re-thinking" of the lesson plan and becoming more familiar with technology, VHP faculty also learned a few "tricks" from their online students. In the middle of the semester, during the implementation stage of the VHP, faculty shared several "surprises" and benefits from their experience in the online environment that could apply to teaching in general. For instance Anne learned to use different word processing techniques. Reviewing assignments and adding comments online helped her save time and provide rapid feedback to students. Also when she prepared her class materials (e.g., readings) she often used online sources and posted them on her website for easy retrieval. The "cut and paste" option made it easier to create examples using different sources. These are basic word processing features that can be used by teachers whether the class is delivered face-

to-face or online and are not ground breaking practices in online instruction. Nevertheless their discovery and use increased this teachers' confidence with using technology. She became very interested to see what other tools she could use to enhance her classes and engage her students and even talked about investigating the use of film/video for the next term. This particular teacher may or may not continue to teach online once the VHP has ended, but her perception of technology has changed and will influence her opinion of its use for teaching in general.

Sophie also shared a "pleasant accident" which occurred as a result of the students in her VHP course taking a more independent approach to studying. Part of the requirements of Sophie's standard course was to view films/documentaries and analyze and challenge the issues portrayed. Students would view a film in class and the teacher would be the one to facilitate the follow-up discussion. With the VHP courses students were expected to view the films at home. Without any prompting some students invited family members to join them, while "taking on the role of the facilitator" to explain the themes. Students were creating their own "meaning" and they would share their insights during online group discussions or during the on-campus portion of the course. Sophie discovered that this type of exercise encourages independent study practices from which any student can benefit, even the teacher. When faculty permit students to take initiative in the creation of knowledge they are often surprised at the ingenuity that surfaces. Furthermore if faculty acknowledge and reward these types of behaviors, students will continue to come up with creative ways to construct meaning.

Another "aha" for Sophie was that the online format provided her with the opportunity to slow down and track individual students' progress on the learning curve.

In her Pro-Forma course, they were reviewing the basics of teaching (i.e. moving students through the levels of learning, to knowing, to understanding and then to thinking, some hand holding and supporting). Sophie admitted that she traditionally tended to “get ahead to the thinking portion”. The nature of the online environment provided her time to consider students’ inquiries and comments before responding and leading them to the next level of development. Ironically the “distance” factor with its opportunity for collaborative discourse over extended periods actually brought her “closer” to her students.

Chris also collected experiences from the VHP that he could apply to his other classes. When asked if he believed that the online experience improved his teaching skills, Chris responded:

“Yes, I think it did in the sense that I discovered another field in which learning can take place. This field corresponds to a different environment that forces me to think differently, to approach teaching from another perspective. This new regard allows new ideas, new techniques... The improvement of my teaching skills happened during these numerous moments of reflection and brainstorming that lead to creation of ‘new’ learning activities or new ways to support learning.

Chris found that he used a “problem-solving” approach in his hybrid online course more so than in his traditional face-to-face course. If the students in the online environment were benefiting from the opportunity to explore different strategies of learning, then this approach might be effective for students in the face-to-face class as well. He intended to incorporate more learning objects encouraging the development of collaborative work in his face-to-face classes in the future.

One of the outcomes of VHP faculty developing and facilitating their online courses was the enhancement of their teaching practices. Learning how to use technology can help faculty save time. Their ability to communicate with students more efficiently through email promotes trust and creates a forum for an extended community of learning. This can be further enhanced in hybrid courses with in-class discussion and exercises. “Slowing down” and reflecting before responding to inquiries is important to developing constructivist teaching and learning. And instructional strategies that promote student involvement in the creation of knowledge help to develop independent study practices and raise the bar on what students can achieve.

Course Design... Less is More... where the number of activities is concerned.

Each of the VHP faculty members started their online course designs by reviewing the lesson plans from their face-to-face classes. Since the core objectives of the courses would not change, knowing ‘what’ they wanted to achieve was straightforward. The challenge lay in ‘how’ to go about achieving it.

As we have seen from the literature (Paloff & Pratt, 2001) faculty often try to replace their classroom techniques step by step as opposed to designing the course with a virtual mindset. Decisions intended to help the students grasp course concepts and facilitate understanding can result in overwhelming them and reducing their desire and ability to learn. For example the “distance” factor of the online course does not initially give the impression that teachers can monitor or coach students. In an attempt to compensate for the lack of “physical presence”, faculty sometimes become over zealous with the amount or type of activities they assign to ensure that students will grasp the concepts. Ironically the teachers’ tendency to want to help students to engage in the

course and “get” the concepts by providing multiple activities, sometimes becomes the reason that students disengage. They become overwhelmed by the number of exercises and/or the mix and complexity of media used. For instance Chris approached the prospect of online instruction using a virtual toolkit as an opportunity to learn new skills and enhance students’ educational experiences. He was very eager to investigate several suggestions for different types of activities (e.g. films available through different TV networks, Jeopardy software for study guides and mini tests, etc.) He responded “if you ask more, you get more” when deciding on the number of exercises that he would include in the hybrid online course. But he also wanted to make sure that he did not prepare too many activities. Depending on “how much more” is being asked, students trying to adjust to the new environment could become confused, feel inadequate and disengage or drop the course altogether.

In an online environment the responsibility for learning falls to a greater extent to the student who more than likely is not accustomed to this approach especially if he/she has not previously taken any form of independent study courses. In the end faculty’s good intentions of providing multiple activities create problems with workload and time management for both themselves and their students.

According to survey results, students in general seemed satisfied with the subject matter. Comments from R1 and R2 of the surveys indicated that they found course content:

“...quite interesting and informative. I particularly enjoy the discussions on global warming and politics.”

“It is relevant to life and quite interesting...it deals with topics based on my program, which is science.”

“The content is interesting and new to me. That’s why I like this course and why I took it.”

However, Round 2 (R2) and Round 3 (R3) of the student surveys conveyed that students believed that they had too many readings, and too many technical applications they needed to learn. Students found themselves at times having to open multiple sites in order to complete an exercise. Comments from R2 of the student surveys included:

“Please centralize course information on one site, not spread over 4-5 different, independent sites.

“We should not be using more than one, perhaps two websites for class work and/or homework. I spent more time searching for class materials online than I did doing the homework itself.”

Managing multiple activities and “trying to get everything done on time” takes away from the quality of the learning experience. When students are able to spend sufficient time to reflect and to challenge the concepts they are exploring “deeper learning” as opposed to “surface learning” is possible.

Promoting Interaction for Students.

Faculty participating in the VHP were especially concerned about students’ ability to interact with one another and themselves in the online environment. The nature of the virtual classroom does not suggest easy assessment of students’ “personalities” or learner style preferences through physical presence, body language cues or facial expressions. Chris shared what he felt was a challenge related to sensing how his students were doing “in class”.

“The difficulty to establish personal contacts, personal impressions (students that arrive always late or always prepared or that are “funny” or silent-sad can be “filed” in a certain box in my mind. Students that daydream can easily be noticed quickly and questioned more or differently to keep them on the edge. I “see” and feel when a student has personal problems

(they can arrive crying to the course) and I can react accordingly. These aspects may not seem related to teaching, but they are very much to learning. Physical distance will create the fact that I won't know them as well, I won't be able to read them as well despite the fact (or because) I will almost only be *reading* their production."

Carol echoed his thoughts.

"I think there's just the personal interaction that will be very very different. It's more limiting in an online course. So that's really the main difference that I see. ...Not being able to see their eyes when you teach and see how they react and see if they frown or not and stuff like that. I will probably see enough of their personality through the work that they hand in, but you don't get that one-on-one contact as often as you would in a classroom."

And so did Sophie.

"There will not be positive flows of energy and or immediate symbiotic feedback that students can experience when they are exploring a concept or new idea in a discussion (replete with body language and eye contact) that is face-to-face and in real time."

"Distance" factor may increase participation. While faculty feel that not "seeing" their students proves limiting, the opposite maybe true for students. Chapter one tells us that shy students are more apt to contribute to "discussions" in an online environment than in a physical classroom. The VHP survey results revealed that although students missed seeing their teacher (R1) they felt less intimidated communicating online and thus were more likely to participate "in class" (R2). The perceived neutrality of the online environment helped them overcome their shyness and share their ideas. In fact Anne discovered that students in her online course versus those that attended her course taught face-to-face interacted more often. It appeared that the online students felt "safe" to ask questions. Anne wasn't sure if it was because they believed they had the "right" to communicate more frequently, or because they had gotten to "know" her better through the group chat sessions and one-to-one email communications. And although the

momentum of correspondence slowed after the mid-term break, Anne still observed greater participation from online students challenging the stigma of “isolation” often associated with online environments.

Group discussions. Very often faculty may interject their opinions and comments during online group discussions with the intent to “help” and keep students “on track” as opposed to letting them explore the material. Instead of providing the “correct answer” faculty should set aside the need to fill the “silence” and ask reflective questions encouraging students to share their own discoveries. Faculty may even develop creative ways to include students. Anne for example took transcripts of the online group discussions, added her own comments and redistributed copies back to the students so that they could review the different perspectives presented by their peers. In this way students could reflect on the discussion after the group had met online. Students expressed they appreciated this technique of sharing different viewpoints. It made them feel they each had equal voice and they were part of the group. Furthermore the transcripts contributed to the class notes.

On-campus communications. In addition to “getting to know students through their work” and their online exchanges, the structure of the hybrid online courses with 30% of class time spent on campus offers a partial solution to faculty trying to get an impression of their students. If teachers take the opportunity to facilitate group discussions or exercises during the “on-campus” classes, they will be able to make their own assessments as well as encourage the building of trust amongst the students. The “relationships” developed on campus can then hopefully be transferred to the online portion of the course. However, if the on campus portion of the schedule is used strictly

for administering exams or viewing films, there is limited opportunity to encourage face-to-face interaction.

Another option to promote interaction is to schedule personal time with students either via phone or through on-campus office hours. Carol planned to make herself available during specific office hours. Students could meet with her at her office or online where they could email or contact her via telephone.

“But I’m hoping to do my office hours on the phone a lot, so when we’re not in the classroom that time that’s been scheduled for the class will be exclusively available to the students so they can reach me by phone. So hopefully we can have a bit more of an intimate relationship that way, rather than just emailing all the time. Which email is fine, but sometimes you have to go beyond. Because we tend to be lazy when we email and write only half the thought or shorten our thoughts a little bit. So that’s really the difference that the communications will be different and we will both, the students and I have to adjust.

Although studies show that email communication between teachers and students are favored to supplement other forms of communication (AFT, 2003; McGraw Hill Study, 2006; McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 2006) emails are not always clear. Accurately explaining or describing something in writing may take several attempts and take up more time than a face-to-face meeting.

On the other hand online communications provide numerous opportunities to improve writing skills. If students are coached on writing skills and given feedback regarding email etiquette the number exchanges to effectively communicate can be reduced saving both faculty and students time.

The nature of the online environment requires that faculty and students who might otherwise interact in face-to-face settings have to adjust to different modes of communication. Initially this may be perceived as a drawback of the online environment.

The inability to observe cues and body language creates insecurity about the authenticity of exchanges. How can we trust who we cannot see? On further examination however, online communication promotes improved writing skills and reflective practices which allows us to convey our messages on a deeper level. Online group discourse is probably richer due to a greater cross-section of opinions from a higher number of participants. And in the case of hybrid programs, opportunities to meet face-to-face can be designed to be more meaningful because they are more the exception than the rule.

Faculty Workload and Time Management.

“Instructors in the online arena will find that the time needed to deliver this type of class is two to three times greater than to deliver a face-to-face class, especially as they develop and deliver a course for the first time.”
(Palloff & Pratt, 2007, p. 73)

There are several misconceptions about the time involved to conceive, design and implement an online course, especially when the technology to be used is new or different. Research has shown that it takes in the order of magnitude of 10 hours of work to create 1 hour of instruction. This does not take into consideration training on new software, running into technical glitches or the actual implementation of the course which brings its own challenges. But anticipating and actually doing are two different things. It was not until the launch date of the VHP courses was drawing nearer that faculty felt they were going to be pressed for time.

During one of our work sessions Chris spoke to us about his struggle with time spent on course objectives and the integration of technology.

“Well it’s just that I have to think about two aspects: the technology for one and the traditional one also. I am preparing the course just like I would with the traditional course. What I mean is that I have to

plan for text and exercises and stuff like that, but also I have to add this technological aspect that adds more concerns.”

Not only does the development of the hybrid online courses take more time but management during implementation can also require extra hours. Despite the reduction in class size, VHP faculty and students still needed time to get used to working and communicating in the new learning space. As an example, the first three weeks of the VHP online courses faculty were experiencing challenges with delays on homework submissions. Students were not reading their emails or checking when homework assignments were due or coordinating with team mates on group assignments. Students also needed assistance using software applications such as Inspiration® to create concept maps. And then there were the difficulties with the FirstClass® email system which was not performing as needed. Teachers complained about “losing” students online and decided to switch to either MSN® Messenger or Hotmail for emailing. These types of difficulties can arise at any point in time. They are “class management” issues that are exacerbated by the “distance” factor. When technology “shorts out” during a traditional in-class demonstration or presentation, the faculty member can still continue using alternate “old tech” tools such as marker or chalk boards, texts or flip charts. In the case of an online distance education course, once the hardware breaks down or online connection is cut or the software does not work, the instruction is terminated only to be resumed after technical difficulties have been resolved. Because online courses are not limited to a “window” in time during which the student can attend class, there is some flexibility, especially when the course is delivered in a hybrid format and students can

meet face-to-face intermittently. However the ability to react and adapt the course structure again requires time.

Teachers want to help their students. They want to see them succeed. The VHP faculty members were no exception. They were very concerned about their students' ability to adjust to the online classroom. When asked if he was more worried about his online students than his face-to-face in-class students, Chris responded that it was actually easier to keep track if they were doing their work online. His common practice was to leave FirstClass® open for Chat at night while he was working on the computer. He explained there were many times when he heard a "ding", followed by an open window on the screen containing the phrase "Sir, are you there?"

Often faculty behavior contributes to the expectation that they are accessible 24 hours per day, everyday. Chris' students became aware of his tendency to "be there" and so often contacted him in this manner. This practice provides security to the students, but unless certain time is set aside for "online office hours", the expectation that faculty are always there to respond is reinforced. This can complicate matters from a time management and planning perspective.

An underlying attraction of online courses is the extended period during which communications can occur. Course postings are available in advance and groups can interact synchronously as well as asynchronously. However this extension of time must also be anticipated and planned for. In this way expectations about timelines for feedback and communications are clear for all concerned. For instance results from the surveys showed that some of the students expressed concern on turn around and feedback

partially because of actual delays on the part of the instructors and partially because of their expectations for “immediate” feedback.

When students believed that they can reach faculty at all times, it gives them a sense of security, but it also creates “communication anxiety in relation to delayed responses in an asynchronous environment” (Harasim et al, 1995, p. 15). Although teachers should log in to follow up with students and make their presence known, defining parameters upfront regarding “online meeting times”, response times and “office hours” can help to set expectations and in turn improve communications.

Comment on Time Management for Students.

We’ve spoken about students’ changed perceptions of themselves as good time managers and repeated their comments that the online courses presented too many readings or too much work. Very often novice online learners expect the virtual course to operate in the same way as courses they have taken on campus. They do not plan ahead to complete their readings, or be available for group online discussions. Nor prepare contingencies for problems that may delay their ability to get their work done on time. As such they turn to the teachers for more assistance and become frustrated with delays in response. Clarification of students’ responsibilities in an online course is very important and often overlooked. Understanding the challenges of the online classroom, the self-discipline and organization that is required should not scare the students but help them to be prepared and make the most out of the online experience. To this point upfront training/orientation and additional support available throughout the term will go far to address time management issues for both the students and faculty.

Capacity for Change

Communities of Practice

In addition to support available through the LITC and the colleges' web-master VHP faculty, the student intern provided design assistance and made recommendations re: instructional strategies and possible learning objects.

Although there were numerous meetings with faculty, especially Sophie and Chris, troubleshooting sessions with all four of the VHP faculty members present could not be coordinated during the first three months due to teacher schedule conflicts and workload. Developing the online courses themselves demanded a great deal of time in addition to the regular teaching load. As such faculty while trying to achieve their respective teaching objectives, did not see an immediate benefit to meet as a group.

These were missed opportunities to exchange ideas and best practices with "near-peers".

"Just as students gain from collaborative learning, faculty members also gain from group discussions of common problems and from joking and interacting with their peers."
(Harasim, et al, 1995, p. 163)

Group meetings or work shops could have enriched the learning process and reinforced faculty confidence with technology and facilitation of online environments prior to "jumping in" and actually teaching online. Individual one-to-one meetings are effective in addressing course specific issues, but the more general course design or class management topics would have benefited from the exchange of ideas and concerns early on.

"Solutions must come through the development of *shared meaning*. The interface between individual and collective

meaning and action in everyday situations is where change stands or falls.” (Fullan,2001, p9).

It's not that faculty did not believe in the value of training. Chris for one believed that teacher training in the uses of technology for learning was critical to the successful implementation of an online learning initiative. He spoke about a retired teacher that had become his mentor and with whom he had had many discussions about the possibilities that online instruction offered. But the challenge lies with setting aside the to time meet as a group; to build off of one another's experience and know-how.

Learning communities are made up of individuals with different levels of expertise which can be shared to benefit others within the group. The value of developing knowledge and skills through the exchange of personal experiences by participants cannot be overstated. Successful communities of practice are very much like mentoring groups in that they depend largely on encouragement of mutual respect and natural exploration of personal practices and challenges.

The community provides a safe place to support and challenge one another building trust amongst its members and reinforcing their motivation to participate in the change process (Fullan, 2007).

Although meeting as a group takes time, the exchange of issues and ideas will help to construct a lexicon of skills and practices, avoid duplication of effort or recurrence of similar problems and develop a strong resource base to support the initiative long term. Furthermore the social aspect of sharing with others facing similar challenges provides positive reinforcement and reduces the feeling of isolation that is often felt by teachers in online environments.

Once the VHP faculty actually had a chance to come together and exchange ideas with one another on ways to improve online instruction and learning, their level of excitement about the online courses seemed to return to the original enthusiasm observed at the outset of the project. Two weeks prior to the launch of the hybrid online courses all four VHP faculty members met for a review session with the student intern and I. The object was to share insights, concerns, strategies and tips and learn from each others' experiences leading towards a community of practice. The first 5-6 weeks of the hybrid online courses were defined. Faculty still needed to make decisions about "housekeeping" items such as whether they should deviate from the specified schedule of on-campus versus online days for their classes or how to organize students into groups to facilitate increased student-to-student and student-to-teacher interaction. They were debating whether evaluations (i.e. examinations and tests) should be held during on-campus days or administered online and whether to use peer review as part of their evaluation scheme. It was apparent that the opportunity to exchange information and share technical skills provided reinforcement for decisions already taken. Providing suggestions for new ways to tackle challenges was the beginning of a "community of practice" which could support their efforts through implementation of the hybrid online courses. Faculty agreed to meet again to share experiences and ideas on instructional strategy, work load and time management and the use of technology. They also agreed to share documentation such as a list of technical "how to's" for the students. Faculty still anticipated that there would be issues (either breakdowns in technology or weaknesses in design or students that could not adapt to the new environments), but as a result of the

group discussions they seemed more confident about being teachers in the hybrid online learning environments.

In their roles as teachers faculty are often regarded as the expert or the guru. Having to essentially ask for help on “how to teach” in the new environment is difficult. But once they share their expertise on technology or study aids and obtain hints for class management or time management they are less resistant to participate.

Ironically availability of support is one of the extrinsic factors faculty have rated as being important to participation in online distance education. But multiple obligations, responsibilities and workload often limit the time available to attend workshops, group meetings or logging on to online mentoring forums. As such faculty release time should be strongly considered for the development of future online initiatives, especially for first time instructors.

“The total outcome of knowledge acquired and shared is far than what would be generated through independent , individual engagement with the material. The bonus is the newly developed sense of self and sense of empowerment that accompanies the process. The power of community is great. The power of a learning community is even greater, as it supports the intellectual as well as personal growth and development of its members.”
(Palloff & Pratt, 2007, p. 232)

Communities of practice require that individuals come together to exchange knowledge and skills but in the long run save time and effort. They are the not-so-secret “secret weapon” of organizations/institutions who successfully implement innovation. In fact the sustainability of innovation longer term requires the continuance of these types of practices which build a network of mentors and on-site “experts” and improves the organizations’ ability to respond to issues rapidly and effectively.

Student Preparation and Support.

There is sufficient research (Palloff & Pratt, 2001) to support that the successful online student is typically more independent, self-disciplined and self-directed than students who otherwise rely more heavily on instructor guidance and coaching. Students new to online learning and who are used to or prefer different learning strategies may find the online environment intimidating. To address this, many institutions who offer online courses also provide orientation workshops and even promote a student online readiness questionnaire to help identify potential problem areas.

In the VHP classes students were able to see one another for a total of 3 hrs during the first week before working together online for the next class and then meeting again face-to-face. The orientation/introduction to the courses included a review of the syllabus, the evaluation scheme and testing some of the software that was going to be used (e.g., course web-site, FirstClass® email, CAN-8@VirtualLab™ and course specific tools such as Inspiration® and Google Earth™). The 70/30 hybrid on-campus/online schedule would ideally allow for students to develop rapport before entering longer periods of online collaboration. But what can be accomplished during the first one to two classes? If most of the time is spent orienting students to the course syllabus, software to be used, etc., the opportunity to develop some basic contacts with the other students is reduced. If standard software is used, perhaps the orientation to technology could be done outside of class. Just as purchasing texts are a requirement, orientation to the software could also be listed as a requirement for the course. This would free up class time for group exercises, allowing the students to interact in the face-to-face

environment. Furthermore if the number of applications is limited than the time that students will need to adjust will be more manageable.

Students who have never participated in distance education courses more than likely have to undergo several levels of adjustment. The time required to learn how to use different software is compounded by also having to become comfortable with independent study practices, let alone learning course content. As such the learning curve at the outset is steep and students could benefit greatly from coaching on independent study skills, writing skills, planning and time management as well as workshops for use of the course management systems and software applications.

Administrators could build on the existing student support systems and programs. The existing student Learning Center or even the LITC may be a good repository for online practice and study skills. Incorporating an orientation workshop for students registered in online courses and providing a online “drop-in-center, perhaps even assigning an online mentor will go a long way to reducing the feeling of isolation for students and permitting faculty to concentrate on facilitating the acquisition of knowledge.

Beliefs, Experience and Change.

According to Fullan (2001) change in education is a “multidimensional innovation”; a three legged stool of sorts, involving 1) change of instructional approach (e.g. instructional strategy and activities), 2) revision of materials (e.g. course materials and/or technology), and 3) ultimately a change in assumptions and beliefs about the innovation. Faculty participating in the VHP learned to change their approach to teaching despite their initial reflexes to emulate their traditional instructional strategies. They

learned to use new software and develop different learning objects to engage students and provide them exercises with which to construct their own meaning. Their perception of what could be accomplished in online environments changed, although to varying degrees.

Anne and Chris had both been intrigued by the hybrid online courses and believed that online distance education was an important part of the future of academic institutions. Although they were well aware of the hurdles that still needed to be overcome before a smooth implementation of hybrid online courses was possible, both indicated that they would like to deliver their subject matter in the hybrid online model the following year. Chris wanted to see if he could improve his “game” and Anne was going to investigate alternate methods for presenting learning objects. Their experiences reinforced their beliefs of online teaching and learning.

Sophie’s response was different. Early on in the project she had shared that she was “fundamentally opposed to online learning”. Based on her observations of another academic institution she recounted “Many an institution who have gotten ‘curriculum up and running online’ no longer hire teachers, hire facilitators...all in the name of efficiency...and cost cutting.” However she agreed to participate in the pilot in order to draw her own conclusions.

“I am a people person. So I’m not sure that as a teacher I am going to like this. I’m not saying I won’t or I will, but I don’t know that I’ll ever want to do another one of these.”

By the end of the term she had made her decision. Although she admitted to seeing the potential for high quality online courses Sophie remained sensitive to prospective jobs lost due to “packaging” of courses by content experts and facilitated by

lower salaried instructors. She felt she had learned a great deal through the process of developing the online course. However, she believed that the hybrid online format was not appropriate for her subject matter nor did it suit her instructional style. Furthermore she believed that students were not ready to be independent learners.

Whether online teaching and learning “fits” an institution will depend to a great extent whether its members believe it fits them. Not all teachers want to teach or are effective facilitators of online learning. This is not a failure in the project or a weakness.

Administrators of the VHP hoped that participating faculty would fill the roles of “early adopters” which could act as spokespersons for the hybrid online initiative and help to build the critical mass, which in addition to “champions” or “influential leaders” is so important to its continuation. However if faculty despite a relatively positive outcome do not continue to participate, it does not mean that progress has not occurred or that they do not contribute to the change process. For instance when faculty apply new skills learned through the facilitation of the hybrid online courses (e.g., different learning objects, use of peer reviews, collaborative exercises, online forms of communication, word processing techniques, etc.) to enhance class management or instructional strategies they are essentially effecting change. And by example or observational modeling, are influencing their peers.

The adoption of innovation can often be likened to a “trickling” affect rather than a flow. We have to remember that change does not occur sequentially or on a linear schedule. It is a painstaking and often not easily measured process that relies heavily on the willingness of individuals to continuously challenge their own beliefs and experience development “in use”. And amidst all of the challenges there can be progress. If anything

“smooth implementation is often a sign that not much is really changing” (Fullan, 2007, p.123)

Learning from the Past.

The VHP was intended to run for a two-to-three year period. And although there was no formal “formative evaluation” process through the first year debriefing sessions with faculty during and at the end of this research effort identified some important issues.

At the end of May, 2006 VHP faculty compiled a list of practices that they would “keep” or recommend for future hybrid online courses. Many of these had to do with course design and choice of applications for content. For example concept mapping exercises and summary writing exercises or online chat transcripts sent back to students for review. Other recommendations involved the administration of the hybrid online courses, such as inter-departmental promotion and scheduling. For example changing class schedules from twice per week to once per week and from daytime to evenings (e.g., between 6-9 pm). This would provide access to students who work during the day, and facilitate their availability for “in-class” group discussions.

They also suggested student orientation to online learning and coaching and training for optimum utilization of the online environment for both teachers and students. The formation of support groups or communities of practices was also identified as beneficial.

For the continuation of the project they suggested broader involvement from all the college’s departments and outlined the importance of engaging the Vanier College Union and services such as Learning Center and Library and Information Technology Center (LITC) to encourage college wide support and coordination of resources. Finally they

stressed the assignment of a “formal project leader” and/or advisory council to oversee and coordinate the project and report back to the college administration.

The VHP for the most part used the existing infrastructure to test an idea. The first semester that the courses were implemented confirmed some expectations and provided new insights. Continued development of the initiative will require a review of the lessons learned (i.e., what worked well and what did not) to see which actions should be taken in the short term. Although still in the early stages of implementation, the initiative would benefit from a formative evaluation process to track progress versus objectives and record intended as well as unintended outcomes. In this way information about the VHP is captured in a time frame when adjustments can be made allowing for the continued evolution of the implementation process.

CHAPTER 4

Conclusion

Through Experience We Learn Anew

In the fall of 2005 four faculty members at Vanier College began the design and development process for hybrid online versions of the courses they taught. Their initial impressions ranged from excitement about the possibilities of online education to concern about what it would mean for the future of teaching and learning at the institution.

As an individual report this study provides the participants of the project with a “lexicon” of “watch outs” and improvements for their continued exploration of online teaching and learning models. As part of the collection of research studies on faculty transforming their lesson plans from face-to-face environments to courses delivered in a predominantly virtual setting, it confirms many aspects we already know about online education and serves as a reference for other organizations interested in evaluating similar models.

The first year of the pilot project did not see any impact on the college’s completion of schooling or Academic Success rates, but “trialing” the concept using the existing infrastructure provided the administrators and faculty the opportunity to learn about managing and teaching in the new environment. The experience of the participants created a knowledge base which will help to answer questions of whether online models of education “fit” the college.

Many of the lessons learned by the pilot project participants are consistent with what we find in the literature. For instance we know that online courses, even in a hybrid format (e.g., 70/30) require more time for planning and execution than the same courses

delivered in a traditional face-to-face environment. The pilot project faculty learned that the transition of their face-to-face lesson plan was more than a matter of choosing computer mediated learning objects or when to schedule group online discussions, it required the time to reflect, or as one faculty member explained “to work through the course”; to transform it.

The value of upfront training and the benefits of communities of practice are often repeated throughout the texts on how to support the development and delivery of successful online education models. But workload issues and multiple responsibilities limited the time that the VHP faculty were available for group work sessions. Eventually they learned that meeting with peers can actually save time especially when common applications such as the creation of study guides or technical cheat sheets can be shared or when exchanging ideas on class management or how to use certain software.

We are reminded that an increased number of applications and uses of software rather than enhance the learning experience can overwhelm students. Furthermore it has a direct impact on the training requirements, workload and time management for both faculty and students. “Less is more” is a good rule of thumb for course design, with emphasis placed on the need for faculty to pass some of the responsibility of the teaching-learning process to students. But most students, especially those participating in online courses for the first time, are unprepared for this. First of all they are often unaware of what it means to be an independent learner and the expectation that they are more than just recipients of information. Secondly their self-knowledge of their study practices is based on different models of learning, which are typically not effective in online learning environments.

This brings us to the next strongly recommended practice, which is the availability of training and support for both students and faculty. Training not only in the use of software applications, but orientation to what it means to participate online and techniques for planning and time management. Coaching students on how to effectively “show up” and participate in class is as important as coaching faculty with their online facilitation techniques, especially given the natural tendency to revert back to traditional roles as teachers and students under stressful conditions.

The fact that measures to avoid or reduce the impact of these lessons have already been written about, makes them no less valuable for the project participants. Much of the success of adoption of any innovation depends largely on the perception of members who take part in it. Experiencing the challenges of the pilot project was necessary in order for the participants to make value judgments about the complexity of the process, its impact on students and the available support infrastructure.

Change Initiative or Learning Initiative?

Capturing lessons learned and discussing alternative actions for the future is important for the continued development of an initiative. As long as the discussions lead to some form of mobilization. But unless the lessons learned are evaluated and where feasible applied, the pilot cannot achieve its potential. The beginning of an initiative usually involves a period of clarification and verification as participants test the parameters and define their roles. For the VHP this could mean the first 2-3 years where participants continue to fine tune their instructional techniques, update different technology, form communities of practices and provide student support services for online learning.

A formative evaluation process to assess where the implementation of the hybrid online courses is effective and where it is weak can be part of that clarification/verification process. Eventually if the members of the institution determine that there is value in sustaining hybrid online courses as part of the curriculum longer term, there will be a need for a more formally coordinated and integrated plan with agreed to e-learning objectives, choice of technology, commitment of resources, criteria to evaluate progress and timelines, etc. (Haddad, 2002). Ideally the plan would be part of the institutions strategic objectives and coordinated across different departments, especially with respect to policies regarding release time, intellectual property, teacher training and support and student preparation and support for online participation. The involvement of other departments can result in increased resources to support the initiative as well as insights to optimize existing processes. Planning and collaboration with faculty (e.g., scheduling of courses, selection and use of technology and group work and coaching) can help to optimize the use of technology promote efficient work processes for faculty, and facilitate access and adaptability for students.

Again, this also depends to what extent the administration wants to “control” the diffusion of the idea. There is a fine line between creating an infrastructure to support education delivery and telling faculty how to teach their courses. That being said unwillingness or the inability to take the lessons learned from the VHP and translate them to future states reduces the likelihood of the innovation to be sustained.

If the Pilot Ends, Has it Failed?

Very often when initiatives result in unintended outcomes the champions and/or participants feel that they have missed the original mark and nothing has changed.

Whether the institution decides to fully adopt the innovation or not, the process of evaluation already contributes to experience and growth. Even if the hybrid online initiative is discontinued or delayed subsequent to its initial 2-3 year test period, those that were involved with the implementation will have expanded their skills and increased their confidence in different teaching and learning conditions.

The administrators of the pilot project believed that innovation was necessary not only to help address the needs of students, but also to achieve strategic educational goals. They believed that even the modest of trials could attract interested parties and begin to demonstrate whether or to what extent hybrid online models of education delivery was a good strategy for the college. By overcoming the challenges of re-inventing their roles, learning how to use technology and different instructional techniques, managing logistics and new work processes, the participants of the pilot project achieved progress in areas originally not anticipated.

Opportunities for Further Research

This case study looks at the first year of the hybrid online pilot project and as such is limited to issues related to the clarification and verification process of the initiative. An evaluative research effort that follows the progress of the pilot project in the future could provide longitudinal data and illuminate issues that arise through the progression of an initiative as it moves from the early adoption stage on to full implementation.

Another area where research could contribute is in helping faculty and administrators better understand what aspects of online learning students translate to other learning situations. For example students may experience improvements in

computer literacy through use of different software and frequent online exchanges. They may even learn how to better schedule themselves to be able to keep pace with the online format. And they can build confidence with their abilities to ask questions and reflect on concepts learned in the class. However this does not give us information on what or how well they transfer these skills outside of the hybrid online class to other learning situations. If we are attempting to facilitate life long learning skills it is beneficial to understand the implications of online participation for students in the long run.

How to Answer the Research Question

This research effort aspired to explore the experience of change faced by a small group of faculty members and their administrators as they evaluated the feasibility of e-learning at the college through a pilot of four hybrid online distance courses. The intent was not to offer a fool proof guide to online distance education program implementation, but to stimulate dialogue about , “What factors need to be considered by administrators and their faculty when trying to determine if and to what extent online distance education ‘fits’ their institution?”

Through the experiences of the pilot project participants we have seen first hand the practical aspects and the mechanics involved in adapting to teaching and learning online, reinforcing their importance for effective facilitation of quality online education. But this research would not be complete if it did not underscore another aspect that was raised earlier in the discussion. Understanding why the pilot project was designed as a “skunkworks” is as important to answering the question whether online education fits the institution as is learning about the tactical aspects of implementing the online courses.

The literature tells us that change within an organization requires an “unfreezing” of the core beliefs of members of that organization, the opportunity for individuals or groups to experience what the change might mean for them, a re-evaluation of their beliefs and then with a new perspective “refreezing” (Wirth, 2004). But this cannot happen all at once. Change occurs over time. And effective evaluation of an initiative requires an institutional culture that promotes the open exchange of different viewpoints.

Although the hybrid online pilot project was originally designed within the Career and Technology department, does not mean it is of no value to other departments. But because other departments were not part of the decision to initiate and the process with which to evaluate the outcome, they may rightfully question its ability to achieve the objectives. On the other hand the expectation that everyone has to agree to the concept in order for it to be tested is unreasonable. “Paralysis by analysis” has often caused organizations more difficulties than the willingness to take risks in order to gain information so that the benefits and constraints can be better understood.

Fostering an environment where opposing viewpoints are dealt with on a collective and constructive basis (i.e., taking an institutional as well as a departmental approach) is difficult. But it provides the opportunity to gather different perspectives and increases the likelihood of mitigating factors that would deter innovation once it’s underway. Let’s consider selection of technology for online courses as an example. Instead of one department determining the “technology of choice”, representation of the needs, expectations and questions from different departments working in collaboration with the LITC reduces the likelihood of procuring multiple types of technology and promotes the exchange of good practices amongst the ultimate users.

Another example could be the availability of resources to support a student “drop-in center” to help orient students to online learning environments. Not everyone may agree with the need for a student online help center. But if members of the organization approach the question from a systems or institutional basis, the answer may be different than if it was strictly a departmental issue. Considering both the smaller and the larger picture is important. In this way the benefits as well as the challenges are shared and synergies of technology and work processes can be realized.

Taking a “departmental” approach did not impede the initiation of the pilot project, nor will it most likely create great problems over the short term. But going forward administrators and faculty need to remember that while focusing on promoting the value of hybrid online courses is good strategy, ignoring the policies and practices that hinder innovation is not.

Certainly individual online initiatives can continue to evolve giving the impression that innovation is working because a few faculty are facilitating their courses through a hybrid online model, or others are using technology to supplement their courses. But the implementation and ultimately continuation of a quality hybrid online program that meets accreditation requirements and achieves pedagogical and financial objectives depends not only on decisions taken about course design, or support services or choices about technology. It also depends on the ability for members of the institution to capitalize on their different experiences and viewpoints. This is what makes communities of practice function and thrive. This is what encourages the creation of synergies across departments and the effective evaluation of new ideas. This is the institution’s capacity for change.

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Appendices

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Appendix A

CONSENT FORM FOR VANIER STAFF TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I agree to participate in a research effort conducted by Richard F. Schmid and Robert M. Bernard, in conjunction with a Team of Masters Students, from the Department of Education at Concordia University.

A. PURPOSE.

The purpose of the research is assist teachers in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of CEGEP blended courses, as well as to collect data pertaining to teachers' approach and perceptions throughout these processes.

B. PROCEDURES.

I have been informed that a Team from Concordia University will observe and work with me throughout the stages of development of a pilot of blended courses at Vanier College.

The Team will provide assistance for the transition from in-class curriculum to a blended learning environment, help with the identification and application of online learning activities and underscore strategies that can facilitate an effective adoption of the pilot project once it has been completed.

To gain a better understanding of the issues encountered during the creation and implementation of a new blended environment, the Team will collect and record information on the mechanics of the development process and perspectives and preferences of teachers and other Vanier Administration and Staff members.

C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION.

- I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue participation at any time without negative consequences.
- I am free to participate in certain aspects described in "B" above to the exclusion of others.
- Participation in this study is strictly CONFIDENTIAL.
- Data from this study may be published and will be done in anonymous fashion.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.

I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Bob Bernard, Concordia University, at _____ or by email at _____.

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM FOR VANIER FACULTY TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I agree to participate in a research effort conducted by Richard F. Schmid and Robert M. Bernard of the Department of Education at Concordia University in conjunction with a Team of Masters Students from the Educational Technology and Educational Studies Programs also at Concordia University.

A. PURPOSE.

The purpose of the research is assist teachers in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of CEGEP blended courses, as well as to collect data pertaining to teachers' approach and perceptions throughout these processes.

B. PROCEDURES.

I have been informed that a Team from Concordia University will observe and work with me throughout the stages of development of a pilot of blended courses at Vanier College.

The Team will provide assistance for the transition from in-class curriculum to a blended learning environment, help with the identification and application of online learning activities and underscore strategies that can facilitate an effective adoption of the pilot project once it has been completed.

To gain a better understanding of the issues encountered during the creation and implementation of a new blended environment, the Team will collect and record information on the mechanics of the development process and teachers' perspectives and preferences.

C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION.

- You are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without negative consequences.
- You are free to participate in certain aspects described in "B" above to the exclusion of others.
- Participation in this study is strictly CONFIDENTIAL.
- Data from this study may be published and will be done in anonymous fashion.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.

I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) _____
SIGNATURE _____
DATE _____

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Richard F. Schmid, Concordia University, at _____ or by email at _____.

Appendix C

CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I agree to participate in a research effort conducted by Richard F. Schmid and Robert M. Bernard, in conjunction with a Team of Masters Students, from the Department of Education at Concordia University.

A. PURPOSE.

The purpose of the research is to assist teachers in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of CEGEP blended courses, as well as to collect data pertaining to teachers' approach, perceptions and the interaction with the research Team members throughout these processes.

B. PROCEDURES.

I have been informed that a Researcher who is a member of the above mentioned Research Team will observe and work with me throughout the stages of development of a pilot of blended courses at Vanier College.

The Researcher will provide assistance for the transition from in-class curriculum to a blended learning environment, help with the identification and application of online learning activities and underscore strategies that can facilitate an effective adoption of the pilot project once it has been completed.

To gain a better understanding of the issues encountered during the creation and implementation of a new blended environment, the Researcher will collect and record information on the mechanics of the development process, teachers' perspectives and preferences as well as the perspectives of other research Team members during their involvement in this process.

C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION.

- I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue participation at any time without negative consequences.
- I am free to participate in certain aspects described in "B" above to the exclusion of others.
- Participation in this study is strictly CONFIDENTIAL.
- Data from this study may be published and will be done in anonymous fashion.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.
I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) _____
SIGNATURE _____
DATE _____

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Bob Bernard, Concordia University, at _____ or by email at _____.

Appendix D

CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I agree to participate in a research effort conducted by Dr. Richard F. Schmid and Dr. Robert M. Bernard of the Department of Educational Technology at Concordia University along with a team of Masters Students from Concordia Educational Technology and Educational Studies Programs in conjunction with Vanier College Administration and Faculty members.

A. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to gain information, from a student perspective, on the Vanier online courses with the intent to further improve the quality of online education.

B. Procedure

Procedure consists of a student questionnaire that will be distributed either during class time or online and collected on an agreed upon date/time. It consists of multiple-choice questions and a few short answer questions.

You will be asked to respond to two subsequent questionnaires throughout the term that will help track the progress of the online course(s) and identify areas for improvements.

We estimate that completion of each questionnaire will require about 15 minutes.

C. Conditions

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in the study is confidential.
- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I have carefully studied the above and understand this agreement.

I freely consent and voluntary agree to participate in this study.

Name (please print) _____

Signature _____

Appendix E

Observation Template

Date: _____ **Location** _____ **Prepared**
By: _____

Participants:	Description

Participant Response/Action/Behavior	My Reflections
Summary	

Appendix F

Working Log

Date – Event _____

My Role:

OBJECTIVE:

NOTES:

Personal Observation/Reflection:

Appendix G

Semi-structured Interview Form

Faculty Interview Protocol

Date:

Interviewee (Title and Name): _____

Interviewer: _____

Objective of Meeting:

Other Topics Discussed:

Documents Obtained:

Question 1:

Question 2:

Question 3:

Follow up for next Meeting:

Appendix H

Hybrid/Blended Course Implementation Questionnaire FR - 1

This questionnaire is part of a research effort conducted by Richard F. Schmid and Robert M. Bernard of the Department of Education at Concordia University in conjunction with a Team of Masters Students from the Educational Technology and Educational Studies Programs also at Concordia University.

In cooperation with the Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance at Concordia, we developed this questionnaire with the objective of learning more about teachers' attitudes and preferences pertaining the transition from in-class curriculum to a blended learning environment. The information obtained from your responses will complement and enhance the insights gained by the participative observers of this research effort. These data will then be used to support similar transitions for the academic institution under study as well as other institutions with similar interests.

All information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. While overall results may be presented and published, your identity will not be revealed.

Participation in this questionnaire is voluntary and you are free to discontinue at any time. However, your professional experiences and opinions are crucial to helping us understand teaching from the educator's point of view and, in particular, the challenges you face in creating and developing a blended program as well as how resources should be organized to best help you accomplish your objectives.

We would greatly appreciate your taking the time to complete our questionnaire and thank you in advance for your time and collaboration.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please mark all your answers directly on this questionnaire. Where appropriate circle the response which most closely represents your experience.

After you have completed the questionnaire, please return it to a member of the Research Team from Concordia University.

SECTION I – Self-Perception of Teaching Style and Preferences

- I believe the teaching methodology that I currently use in class is...
(Circle the most appropriate response. **Choose only one**).
 - Largely teacher-directed (e.g., teacher-led discussion, lecture)
 - More teacher-directed than student-centred
 - Even balance between teacher-directed and student-centred activities
 - More student-centred than teacher-directed
 - Largely student-centred (e.g., cooperative learning, discovery learning)
- Using the scale provided, please indicate how often the following instructional techniques are used in your current in-class course, i.e., the same one you will be teaching on-line in the next semester.

A	B	C	D	E
Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very Often

Instructor led lectures.	A	B	C	D	E
Textbooks or other written material.	A	B	C	D	E
Class discussions.	A	B	C	D	E
Independent projects and/or independent assignments.	A	B	C	D	E
Group projects and/or group assignments.	A	B	C	D	E
Computer based instruction.	A	B	C	D	E
Concept Maps	A	B	C	D	E
Student-developed activities.	A	B	C	D	E

SECTION II – Integrating use of computer technology in current in class environment

1. For each teaching activity listed below please indicate how frequently you have used computer technology in your current in-class course.

A	B	C	D	E
Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very Often

Instruction and demonstration of concepts using either word processing, simulations, games, tutorials and/or CD-ROM	A	B	C	D	E
Communicating and interacting with students using email, computer-conferencing, on-line journal and/or chat (e.g. First Class)	A	B	C	D	E
Organization and analysis of course material using data bases, spreadsheets, maintaining digital records, lesson plans, statistics and/or charts	A	B	C	D	E
Presentation of course material to class using desktop publishing, digital video, digital camera, graphics, computer conferencing and/or an LCD projector.	A	B	C	D	E
Assignments, tests exams, portfolios are created and/or evaluated using computer technology	A	B	C	D	E

2. Using the scale provided, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

A	B	C	D	E
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

In the current in-class version of the course to be presented as a blended class next semester, I feel that the students...

Effectively interact with the instructor.	A	B	C	D	E
Effectively interact with other students.	A	B	C	D	E
Are in control of their learning.	A	B	C	D	E
Are actively participating in the class.	A	B	C	D	E
Take advantage of learning opportunities and resources.	A	B	C	D	E
Develop knowledge of basic concepts and facts.	A	B	C	D	E
Learn to think critically about this subject.	A	B	C	D	E
Develop links between specific concepts and themes	A	B	C	D	E
Will be able to apply what they learn in-class to outside situation	A	B	C	D	E

SECTION III- View on blended learning

Using the scale provided, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the implementation of blended learning

A	B	C	D	E
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

The implementation of blended learning in schools...

1. Increases academic achievement by students (e.g. grades).	A	B	C	D	E
2. Results in students neglecting important traditional learning resources (e.g., library books).	A	B	C	D	E
3. Promotes the development of students' written communication and presentation skills.	A	B	C	D	E
4. Is an effective tool for students of all abilities	A	B	C	D	E
5. Accommodates student's individual learning styles	A	B	C	D	E
6. Motivates students to get more involved in learning activities	A	B	C	D	E
7. Motivates students to complete their education	A	B	C	D	E
8. Promotes the development of students' ability to relate to and work with others	A	B	C	D	E
9. Will increase the amount of stress and anxiety students will experience	A	B	C	D	E
10. Will reduce student-teacher interaction	A	B	C	D	E
11. Will reduce student-student interaction.	A	B	C	D	E
12. Will reduce student-content interaction	A	B	C	D	E
13. Improves student learning of critical concepts and ideas.	A	B	C	D	E
14. Is only successful if computer technology is part of the students' home environment.	A	B	C	D	E
15. Makes classroom management more difficult for the teacher.	A	B	C	D	E
16. Is successful only if there is adequate teacher training in the uses of technology for learning	A	B	C	D	E
17. Gives teachers the opportunity to be learning facilitators instead of information providers.	A	B	C	D	E
18. Enhances the teachers' professional development	A	B	C	D	E
19. Increases the workload on the teacher throughout the duration of the course	A	B	C	D	E
20. Is effective if teachers participate in the selection of computer technologies to be integrated	A	B	C	D	E
21. Limits the teachers' choices of instructional materials	A	B	C	D	E
22. Requires extra time to plan learning activities	A	B	C	D	E
23. Will make teaching more efficient once the preliminary framework has been created.	A	B	C	D	E
24. Is an over all inferior method for teaching when compared to the traditional classroom setting.	A	B	C	D	E

Section IV: Perceived Level of Comfort with Computer Technology

Please read the descriptions of each of the six stages related to the process of integrating computer technology in teaching activities. Choose the stage that best describes you right now.

A. Awareness

I am aware that technology for teaching exists, but do not make use of it for instruction.

B. Learning

I am currently trying to learn the basics for computers and am sometimes frustrated using them.

C. Understanding

I am beginning to understand the process of using technology and can think of specific tasks in which it might be useful.

D. Familiarity

I am gaining a sense of self-confidence in using the computer for specific tasks.

E. Adaptation

I think about the computer as an instructional tool to help me. I can use many different computer applications.

F. Creative Application

I can apply what I know about technology in the classroom. I am able to use it as an instructional aid and have integrated computers into the curriculum.

Thank you very much for your participation in our study.

Appendix I

Hybrid/Blended Course Implementation Questionnaire – FR2

This questionnaire is part two of a three-part series which will contribute to the research efforts of Richard F. Schmid and Robert M. Bernard, of the Department of Education at Concordia University, in conjunction with a Team of Masters Students, from the Educational Technology and Educational Studies Programs also at Concordia University. The research effort focuses on online distance education at Vanier College.

Participation in this questionnaire is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time. However, your professional experiences and opinions are crucial to helping us understand teaching from the educator's point of view and, in particular, the challenges you face in creating and developing a hybrid program as well as how resources should be organized to best help you accomplish your objectives.

All information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. While overall results may be presented and published, your identity will not be revealed. We greatly appreciate your taking the time to complete our questionnaire and thank you in advance for your collaboration.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please mark all your answers directly on this questionnaire. Where appropriate circle the response that most closely represents your experience.

After you have completed the questionnaire please return it to a member of the Research Team from Concordia University. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact either _____ or Wendy at _____ and _____ respectively.

Thank you for your collaboration.

SECTION I – Self-Perception of Teaching Style and Preferences

1.2. I believe the teaching methodology that I currently use in the hybrid course is...
(Circle the most appropriate response. **Choose only one.**)

- A. Largely teacher-directed (e.g., teacher-led discussion, lecture)
- B. More teacher-directed than student-centred.
- C. Even balance between teacher-directed and student-centred activities.
- D. More student-centred than teacher-directed.
- E. Largely student-centred (e.g., cooperative learning, discovery learning).

2.3. Using the scale provided, please indicate how often the following instructional techniques are used in your current hybrid course.

A	B	C	D	E
Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very Often

Instructor led online discussions.	A	B	C	D	E
On-line texts and/or research materials.	A	B	C	D	E
On-line video.	A	B	C	D	E
Independent projects and/or independent assignments.	A	B	C	D	E
Group projects and/or group assignments.	A	B	C	D	E
Concept Maps.	A	B	C	D	E
Student-developed activities.	A	B	C	D	E
Online group discussions.	A	B	C	D	E

SECTION II – Integrating Use of Computer Technology in Current Hybrid Environment

1. Please indicate the extent to which you use the following instructional tools in your current hybrid course

A	B	C	D	E
Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very Often

Instruction and demonstration of concepts using word processing.	A	B	C	D	E
Instruction and demonstration of concepts using either simulations, games, tutorials and/or CD-ROM.	A	B	C	D	E
Communicating and interacting with students using email.	A	B	C	D	E
Communicating and interacting with students using computer-conferencing.	A	B	C	D	E
Instruction and demonstration of concepts using online journals.	A	B	C	D	E
Communicating and interfacing with students using chat.	A	B	C	D	E
Organization and analysis of course material using databases, spreadsheets, maintaining digital records, lesson plans, statistics and/or charts.	A	B	C	D	E
Presentation of course material in class using desktop publishing, Power Point, digital video, digital camera, graphics, computer conferencing and/or LCD projector.	A	B	C	D	E

2. Using the scale provided, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

A	B	C	D	E
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

In the current hybrid version of the course I believe that the students...

Effectively interact with the instructor.	A	B	C	D	E
Effectively interact with other students.	A	B	C	D	E
Are in control of their learning.	A	B	C	D	E
Are actively participating in the in-class on campus sessions.	A	B	C	D	E
Are actively participating online.	A	B	C	D	E
Take advantage of learning opportunities and resources.	A	B	C	D	E

Develop knowledge of basic concepts and facts.	A	B	C	D	E
Learn to think critically about this subject.	A	B	C	D	E
Develop links between specific concepts and themes.	A	B	C	D	E
Will be able to apply what they learn in the course to outside situations.	A	B	C	D	E
Are able to complete assignments on time.	A	B	C	D	E
Need constant clarification of what needs to be done.	A	B	C	D	E
Need constant clarification of course material.	A	B	C	D	E
Enjoy the online collaborative work.	A	B	C	D	E

SECTION III- Views on Hybrid Learning

1. Using the scale provided, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the implementation of hybrid learning

A	B	C	D	E
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

I believe that the implementation of hybrid learning in CÉGEP...

Increases academic achievement by students (e.g., grades).	A	B	C	D	E
Results in students neglecting important traditional learning resources (e.g., library books).	A	B	C	D	E
Promotes the development of students' written communication and presentation skills.	A	B	C	D	E
Is an effective tool for students of all abilities.	A	B	C	D	E
Accommodates student's individual learning styles.	A	B	C	D	E
Motivates students to get more involved in learning activities.	A	B	C	D	E
Motivates students to complete their education.	A	B	C	D	E
Promotes the development of students' ability to relate to and work with others.	A	B	C	D	E
Increases the amount of stress and anxiety students will experience.	A	B	C	D	E
Reduces student-teacher interaction.	A	B	C	D	E
Reduces student-student interaction.	A	B	C	D	E
Reduces student-content interaction.	A	B	C	D	E
Improves student learning of critical concepts and ideas.	A	B	C	D	E
Is only successful if computer technology is part of the students' home environment.	A	B	C	D	E

Allows for rapid feedback to the students regarding their work.	A	B	C	D	E
Makes course management more difficult for the teacher.	A	B	C	D	E
Is successful only if there is adequate teacher training in the uses of technology for learning.	A	B	C	D	E
Gives teachers the opportunity to be learning facilitators instead of information providers.	A	B	C	D	E
Enhances the teachers' professional development.	A	B	C	D	E
Is effective if teachers participate in the selection of computer technologies to be integrated.	A	B	C	D	E
Limits the teachers' choices of instructional materials.	A	B	C	D	E
Requires extra time to plan learning activities.	A	B	C	D	E
Makes teaching more efficient once the preliminary framework has been created.	A	B	C	D	E
Overall, is an inferior method for teaching when compared to the traditional classroom setting.	A	B	C	D	E

Section IV: Perceived Computer Technology Knowledge

A- Please read the descriptions of each of the six stages related to the process of integrating computer technology in teaching activities. Choose the stage that best describes you right now and circle the letter.

A. Initial Awareness

I am aware that technology for teaching exists, but do not make use of it for instruction.

B. Basics Learning

I am currently trying to learn the basics for computers and am sometimes frustrated using them.

C. Functional Understanding

I am beginning to understand the process of using technology and can think of specific tasks in which it might be useful.

D. Good Familiarity

I am gaining a sense of self-confidence in using the computer for specific tasks.

E. Extended Adaptation

I think about the computer as an instructional tool to help me. I can use many different computer applications.

F. Creative Application

I can apply what I know about technology in the classroom. I am able to use it as an instructional aid and have integrated computers into the curriculum.

Section V: Motivating and Inhibiting Factors

a). **Motivating Factors:** Using the scale provided, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree that the following factors would motivate you to participate in a hybrid course in the future.

A	B	C	D	E	
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Personal motivation to use technology.	A	B	C	D	E
Opportunity for scholarly pursuit.	A	B	C	D	E
Reduced teaching load.	A	B	C	D	E
Opportunity to use personal research as a teaching tool.	A	B	C	D	E
Required by department.	A	B	C	D	E
Support and encouragement from Dean or Chair.	A	B	C	D	E
Support and encouragement from institution's administration.	A	B	C	D	E
Working conditions (e.g. hours, location).	A	B	C	D	E
Job security.	A	B	C	D	E
Monetary support for participation (e.g. stipend, overload).	A	B	C	D	E
Institution expectation for faculty participation.	A	B	C	D	E
Opportunity to develop new ideas.	A	B	C	D	E
Expanding personal skill set for future job opportunities at other institutions or organizations.	A	B	C	D	E
Professional prestige and status.	A	B	C	D	E
Grants for materials/expenses.	A	B	C	D	E
Support and encouragement from departmental colleagues.	A	B	C	D	E
Intellectual challenge.	A	B	C	D	E
Overall job satisfaction.	A	B	C	D	E
Technical support provided by the institution.	A	B	C	D	E
Credit toward promotion and tenure.	A	B	C	D	E
Release time.	A	B	C	D	E
Distance education training provided by the institution.	A	B	C	D	E
Merit pay.	A	B	C	D	E
Greater course flexibility for students.	A	B	C	D	E
Opportunity to enhance instruction through the use of multi-media.	A	B	C	D	E
Ability to reach new audiences that cannot attend classes on campus.	A	B	C	D	E
Opportunity to improve my teaching.	A	B	C	D	E

b). Inhibiting Factors: Using the scale provided, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree that the following factors would inhibit you to participate in a hybrid course in the future.

A	B	C	D	E
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Concern about faculty workload.	A	B	C	D	E
Negative comments made by colleagues about distance education teaching experiences.	A	B	C	D	E
Lack of distance education training provided by institution.	A	B	C	D	E
Lack of support and encouragement from departmental colleagues.	A	B	C	D	E
Lack of release time.	A	B	C	D	E
Lack of professional prestige.					
Lack of technical background.	A	B	C	D	E
Lack of support or encouragement from Dean or Chair.	A	B	C	D	E
Lack of grants for materials/expenses.	A	B	C	D	E
Concern about quality of courses.	A	B	C	D	E
Lack of technical support provided by the institution.	A	B	C	D	E
Lack of merit pay.	A	B	C	D	E
Lack of support and encouragement from institution administrators.	A	B	C	D	E
Lack of monetary support for participation (e.g. stipend, overload).	A	B	C	D	E
Lack of salary increase.	A	B	C	D	E
Lack of credit toward promotion and tenure.	A	B	C	D	E

Please feel free to add any other factors that may motivate or inhibit your participation in teaching an online or hybrid course in the future. Please feel free as well to add any further comments that you wish to include.

Thank you for taking the time to complete our questionnaire.

Appendix J

Student Survey – R1



Vanier College:

Course Description/Number: _____

Date Questionnaire Distributed: _____ Date Retrieved: _____

INSTRUCTIONS:

To the students of this class: Thank you for taking the time to respond to this questionnaire which is part of an evaluation effort of Vanier's Hybrid Course Pilot Project conducted by Concordia University in conjunction with Vanier College Administration and Faculty.

Please be as candid as possible when responding to the questions below.

You will also be asked to respond to two subsequent questionnaires throughout the term that will help track the progress of the online course(s) and identify areas for improvements.

All information that you provide will be kept strictly confidential, that is overall results may be presented and published, but your identity will not be revealed.

The survey is divided into four sections:

- I. Information About the Student and Student Perceptions**
- II. Evaluation of the Course Design and Content**
- III. Evaluation of the use of Technology and Technical Support**
- IV. General comments**

Section I: About the Student:

1. General Background Information

For the questions below, please circle the answer or fill in the blank with information that best reflects your current circumstances and/or opinion.

A. Is this the first online course that you have ever taken?	Yes No
B. Including this course, how many courses are you taking this semester?	1 2 3 4
C. In which program are you registered?	Specify: _____
D. How did you find out about this course?	a. During Registration b. From an Advisor c. From another student
E. Why did you select this course?	a. Time slot preference b. Missing credits c. Curiosity d. Other _____pls specify
F. To the best of your knowledge, which approach helps you learn best?	a. Teacher's lectures b. Personal study and readings c. Hands on experience d. Other _____pls specify
G. Would you consider yourself a student who does not need constant guidance by the teacher (i.e. independent learner)?	Yes To some extent No
H. How would you rate your time management skills?	a. Very good b. Good c. Average d. Below average e. Not very good
I. Do you have access to a computer with internet connection at home?	Yes No

2. Experience with Computer Technology

Using the scale provided, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

A	B	C	D	E
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Prior to taking this class I....

Used the computer at least once per day for non-gaming purposes.	A	B	C	D	E
Was comfortable with online messaging.	A	B	C	D	E
Was comfortable in accessing information via internet.	A	B	C	D	E
Knew how to download files.	A	B	C	D	E
Have used First-Class to communicate or retrieve information.	A	B	C	D	E
Have used Can-8 in other courses.	A	B	C	D	E
Have worked with the Inspiration software.	A	B	C	D	E

3. Student Perception of Blended Learning and Online Instruction

Using the scale provided, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

A	B	C	D	E
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

I believe that ...

I can learn just as well online as I can in a traditional classroom.	A	B	C	D	E
I can interact with my fellow students better in a traditional classroom than online.	A	B	C	D	E
I can interact better with my teacher in this online course than I could in a traditional course.	A	B	C	D	E
This online course will help me to manage my time to study.	A	B	C	D	E
This online course will be more stressful than a traditional class.	A	B	C	D	E
This online course will give me more options to learn than a traditional course.	A	B	C	D	E
Learning online will help me to reflect on what I am learning because I have more time to do so.	A	B	C	D	E

Section II- Evaluation of the Course Design and Content

Using the scale provided, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the Design and Contents of this Course

A	B	C	D	E
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The objectives of this course are clear to me.				
A	B	C	D	E
The online format of the course makes the course more interesting.				
A	B	C	D	E
I have already referred to the students' guide "Tips for Online Learning".				
A	B	C	D	E
The students' guide "Tips for Online Learning" has been helpful in preparing me for what to expect in an online course.				
A	B	C	D	E
The rules and guidelines for how to interact in this course have been made very clear.				
A	B	C	D	E
The amount of work that I have to do for this course is less than my other courses.				
A	B	C	D	E
So far I have been able to communicate with my instructor, as I need to.				
A	B	C	D	E
So far feedback from the instructor on assignments has been timely.				
A	B	C	D	E
So far I have been able to communicate with my classmates without difficulty.				
A	B	C	D	E
The deadlines to complete the online exercises are too short.				
A	B	C	D	E
The information available on the web page clearly explains how to use the course materials and complete the assignments.				
A	B	C	D	E

Section III- Evaluation of the use of Technology and Technical Support

Using the scale provided, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the use of Technology for the online course and the Technical Support available to you.

A	B	C	D	E
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

The instructions and guidelines for how to use the technology (First-Class, Can-8, etc.) in the course has been made very clear.	A	B	C	D	E
Some more training on how to use First-Class would be helpful.	A	B	C	D	E
I feel comfortable using First-Class to communicate with other students in the class.	A	B	C	D	E
I feel comfortable using Can-8 for class exercises.	A	B	C	D	E
Information was available to help me solve technical problems before they caused delays in my coursework.	A	B	C	D	E
I have already contacted Vanier Technical support for help.	A	B	C	D	E
The hours that Vanier Technical support is available meets my needs.	A	B	C	D	E

Section IV: General Comments

What do you like most about this class as an online course with respect to content?

What do you like most about this class as an online course with respect to delivery?

What do you not like about this class as an online course with respect to content?

What do you not like about this class as an online course with respect to delivery?

What would you recommend be changed?

Would you be interested in participating in a focus group to further discuss the above? YES NO

How can we reach you? Name: _____ Email: _____

Appendix K

Student Survey – R2



Vanier College:

Course Description/Number: _____

Date Questionnaire Distributed: _____ Date Retrieved: _____

INSTRUCTIONS:

To the students of this class: Thank you for taking the time to respond to this questionnaire.

This is Round 2 of a three stage student feedback process on Vanier's Hybrid Course Pilot

Project currently being evaluated as part of a research effort conducted by Concordia University

in conjunction with Vanier College Administration and Faculty.

Please be as candid as possible when responding to the questions below.

You will also be asked to one other questionnaire at the end of this term.

All information that you provide will be kept strictly confidential, that is overall results may be presented and published, but your identity will not be revealed.

Similar to the first questionnaire, this survey is divided into four sections:

- V. Information About the Student and Student Perceptions**
- VI. Evaluation of the Course Design and Content**
- VII. Evaluation of the use of Technology and Technical Support**
- VIII. General comments**

Section I: About the Student:

1. General Background Information

For the questions below, please circle the answer or fill in the blank with information that best reflects your current circumstances and/or opinion.

A. In which program are you registered?	Specify: _____
B. To the best of your knowledge, which approach helped you learn best <u>prior</u> to taking this online course?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Teacher's lectures b. Personal study and readings c. Hands on experience d. Other _____ pls specify
C. To the best of your knowledge, which approach helps you learn best while taking this online course?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Teacher's lectures b. Personal study and readings c. Hands on experience d. Other _____ pls specify
D. Would you consider yourself a student that does not need constant guidance by the teacher (i.e. independent learner)?	Yes To some extent No
E. How would you rate your time management skills <u>prior</u> to taking the online course?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Very good b. Good c. Average d. Below average e. Not very good
F. How would you rate your time management skills now that you have been taking the online course for several weeks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Very good b. Good c. Average d. Below average e. Not very good
G. Does taking the online course save you time coming to campus?	Yes To some extent No
H. I believe I am more focused when I study online then when I am sitting in a traditional classroom.	Yes To some extent No

2. Experience with Computer Technology

Using the scale provided, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

A	B	C	D	E
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Taking this online course has...

Helped me be more comfortable with online messaging.	A	B	C	D	E
Improved my ability to access information via internet.	A	B	C	D	E
Improved my ability to download files	A	B	C	D	E
Improved my ability to use FirstClass to communicate or retrieve information.	A	B	C	D	E
Improved my ability to use Can-8.	A	B	C	D	E
	A	B	C	D	E

3. Student Perception of Blended Learning and Online Instruction

Using the scale provided, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

A	B	C	D	E
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Halfway through this online course I believe that ...

I can learn just as well online as I can in a traditional classroom.	A	B	C	D	E
I can interact with my fellow students better in a traditional classroom than online.	A	B	C	D	E
I can interact better with my teacher in this online course than I could in a traditional course.	A	B	C	D	E
This online course helps me to manage my time to study.	A	B	C	D	E
This online course is more stressful than a traditional class.	A	B	C	D	E
This online course gives me more options to learn than a traditional course.	A	B	C	D	E
Learning online helps me to reflect on what I am learning because I have more time to do so.	A	B	C	D	E

Section II- Evaluation of the Course Design and Content

Using the scale provided, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the Design and Contents of this Course

A	B	C	D	E
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The objectives of this course continue to be clear to me.				
A	B	C	D	E
The online format of the course makes the course more interesting.				
A	B	C	D	E
I have referred to the students' guide "Tips for Online Learning".				
A	B	C	D	E
The students' guide "Tips for Online Learning" has been helpful in preparing me for what to expect in an online course.				
A	B	C	D	E
The rules and guidelines for how to interact in this course continue to be clear.				
A	B	C	D	E
The amount of work that I have to do for this course is less than my other courses.				
A	B	C	D	E
I have been able to communicate with my instructor, as I need to.				
A	B	C	D	E
Feedback from the instructor on assignments has been timely.				
A	B	C	D	E
I have been able to communicate with my classmates without difficulty.				
A	B	C	D	E
The deadlines to complete the online exercises are too short.				
A	B	C	D	E
The information available on the web page clearly explains how to use the course materials and complete the assignments.				
A	B	C	D	E

Section III- Evaluation of the use of Technology and Technical Support

Using the scale provided, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the use of Technology for the online course and the Technical Support available to you.

A	B	C	D	E
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Some more training on how to use FirstClass would be helpful.	A	B	C	D	E
I feel comfortable using FirstClass to communicate with other students in the class.	A	B	C	D	E
I feel comfortable using Can-8 for class exercises.	A	B	C	D	E
Information is available to help me solve technical problems before they caused delays in my coursework.	A	B	C	D	E
I have contacted Vanier Technical support for help.	A	B	C	D	E
The hours that Vanier Technical support is available meets my needs.	A	B	C	D	E

Section IV: General Comments

Halfway through the program, what do you like most about this class as an online course with respect to content?
Halfway through the program, what do you like most about this class as an online course with respect to delivery?
Halfway through the program, what do you not like about this class as an online course with respect to content?
Halfway through the program, what do you not like about this class as an online course with respect to delivery?
What would you recommend be changed?

Appendix L

Student Survey – R3



Vanier College:

Course Description/Number: _____

Date Questionnaire Distributed: _____ Date Retrieved: _____

Code: _____

- **IMPORTANT:** Enter the last 4 digits of your telephone or mobile number in the section marked Code above. If you did not use the last 4 digits of your phone number for the last survey, try to remember the 4 digits that you did use.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this third and final questionnaire of a three-stage student feedback process on Vanier's Hybrid Course Pilot Project.

Please be as candid as possible when responding to the questions below.

All information that you provide will be coded and kept strictly confidential. Overall results may be presented and published as part of a research effort conducted by Concordia University in conjunction with Vanier College Administration and Faculty, but your identity will not be revealed.

If you have questions at any time about the survey or the procedures, you may contact Wendy Keller and _____ by email at _____ and _____ respectively.

Thank you very much for your time and support.

Similar to the first and second questionnaires, this survey is divided into four sections:

- IX. Information About the Student and Student Perceptions
- X. Evaluation of the Course Design and Content
- XI. Evaluation of the use of Technology and Technical Support
- General comments

Section I: About the Student:

1. General Background Information

For the questions below, please circle the answer or fill in the blank with information that best reflects your current circumstances and/or opinion.

A. In which program are you registered?	Specify: _____
B. What is the name of this course?	Specify:
C. Do you believe you are a self-motivated person?	Yes To some extent No
D. Do you believe to be more focused in your learning when you study online than when you sit in a traditional classroom?	Yes To some extent No Explain:
E. From your experience in this course, is studying online a time saving experience in comparison to your other in classroom courses?	Yes To some extent No Explain:
F. The amount of work that I had to do for this online course is _____ other courses in the same field of study.	a. more than b. about the same as c. less than
G. This online course, helped you be more confident about using which of the following courseware: Circle all that apply.	a. FirstClass b. Can-8 c. Inspiration d. None
H. How do you prefer to respond to these questionnaires?	a. Electronically online b. Using paper copies

2. Experience with Computer Technology

Using the scale provided, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Taking this hybrid course has prepared me to be able to take other courses at Vanier online because...

I am comfortable working with FirstClass to communicate with classmates	A	B	C	D	E
I am comfortable reading the subject matter online and reflecting on the content.	A	B	C	D	E
I am comfortable planning my schedule so that I have enough time to read the material and complete the assignments	A	B	C	D	E
I am comfortable making arrangements to meet with my fellow students online to discuss the subject	A	B	C	D	E
I am comfortable requesting assistance from the teacher via online messaging.	A	B	C	D	E
I am comfortable completing my assignments on Can-8	A	B	C	D	E
I am comfortable using the Inspiration Software to create concept maps.	A	B	C	D	E

3. Student Perception of Hybrid Learning and Online Instruction

Using the scale provided, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

A	B	C	D	E
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

I believe that ...

I can learn just as well online as I can in a traditional classroom.	A	B	C	D	E
I can learn better online than I can in a traditional classroom	A	B	C	D	E
I need more contact from the teacher either via online messaging or through chat in order to stay on track with my studies.	A	B	C	D	E
I do not interact with my fellow students as much online as I do in a traditional classroom.	A	B	C	D	E
I prefer to interact frequently with my fellow students.	A	B	C	D	E

I can interact with my fellow students just as well in an online class as I can in a traditional class.	A	B	C	D	E
Learning online helps me to reflect on what I am learning because I have more time to do so.	A	B	C	D	E
I prefer learning online because it gives me more time to study	A	B	C	D	E
This online course helps me to manage my time to study.	A	B	C	D	E
I would learn more if I took this course in a traditional classroom setting.					
This online course gives me more options to learn than a traditional course.	A	B	C	D	E
I feel more comfortable participating in group discussions when online then when I sit in a classroom.	A	B	C	D	E
I would recommend taking this class as an online course to a friend.	A	B	C	D	E
As a result of taking this on-line course I plan to take another online course in the near future.	A	B	C	D	E

Section II- Evaluation of the Course Design and Content

Using the scale provided, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the Design and Content of this Course

A	B	C	D	E
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

The online format of the course made the course more interesting.	A	B	C	D	E
I believe I did just as well in this online course as I would have had the course been given in a traditional classroom format.	A	B	C	D	E
The organized chats held for this online class have been very helpful in understanding the subject matter.	A	B	C	D	E
My study habits were the same for this course as for a traditional course.	A	B	C	D	E

Section III- Evaluation of the use of Technology and Technical Support

Using the scale provided, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the use of Technology for the hybrid course and the Technical Support available to you.

A	B	C	D	E
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

For future hybrid classes, more training on how to use FirstClass would be helpful.	A	B	C	D	E
As a result of taking this on-line course I feel that my ability to use the computer to complete assignments has improved.	A	B	C	D	E
Information was available to help me solve technical problems before they caused delays in my coursework.	A	B	C	D	E
I have contacted Vanier Technical support for help.	A	B	C	D	E
The hours that Vanier Technical support was available met my needs.	A	B	C	D	E

Section IV: General Comments

<p>In your opinion, has taking this course helped to prepare you to do well in other online courses in the future?</p>
<p>Do you believe the online course format to be more, the same or less stressful than the same subject given in a traditional classroom? Please explain.</p>

What factors contributed to your success in this hybrid online course? Explain.

What is your impression of hybrid learning? Explain

If you had to teach a course online what would you do the same or differently from your instructors? Explain.

In your opinion, do you believe students at Vanier are ready for hybrid online courses? Explain.