Blended Learning Boot Camps: Invigorating Curriculum Design in Undergraduate Nursing Science

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Academic staff development often follows time-honoured models – a workshop series, individual and small group consultations and the development of complementary online resources. In our experience an annual, two-day Blended Learning Boot Camp with Subject Coordinators from successive year levels has proven to be a successful approach for transforming curriculum delivery with blended learning in the discipline of Nursing, Midwifery and Nutrition.

This poster describes the planning, development and outcomes of this strategic, multi-year project and highlights the changing focus from year-to-year as feedback and evidence dictate.

Keywords: Blended Learning, Curriculum Design, Learning Design, Learning Analytics

Why choose a Boot Camp?

There are many different approaches to professional learning in higher education institutions. Boot Camps are an immersive form of professional learning characterised by focused intensive work with the intent of promoting a change in thinking and/or practice among participants. The Boot Camp model is used to foster an authentic experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984), where participants' knowledge is gained through experience, starting with concrete experiences in blended learning. Experiential learning emphasizes the central role that experience plays in the learning process.
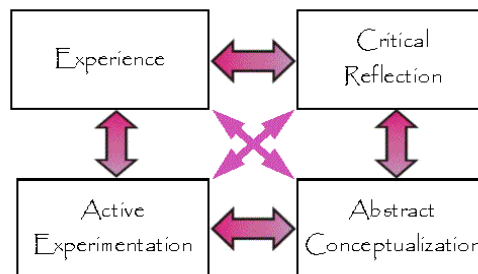

Figure 1: Kolb Experiential Learning Cycle

Boot Camp 2015: Visioning, Storyboarding and Assessment

The design of the first Boot Camp was informed by student activity, success and retention data sourced from the institutional analytics and student data platforms (Cognos and Blackboard Analytics). A curated range of pedagogical support materials was prepared in the form of an iBook providing an easy to access format for participants. Facilitated by Learning, Teaching and Student Engagement (LTSE) staff, the event drew on the work of Professor Gilly Salmon with blueprint and storyboarding activities (Salmon, 2015). Participants were all 1st Year Subject Coordinators and were encouraged to share and discuss teaching practice with a particular focus on assessment.

> I thought it was good for all the Subject Coordinators to be together and really see what the others were doing in their units. I think it will make for a better student experience if we all know what the others are doing especially with their assessment tasks. - Boot Camp 2015 participant survey comment

Boot Camp 2016: The NMN Blended Learning Model

Based on feedback from participating staff in Boot Camp 2015 and a review of the resulting curriculum design, the second Boot Camp was centred around an in-house blended learning model. The NMN Blended Learning Model supported participants, all 2nd Year Subject Coordinators, to prepare a consistent student experience across varying blends of online and face-to-face classroom teaching.
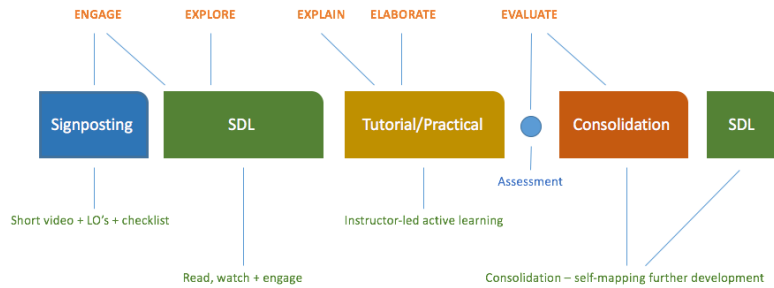
Figure 2: NMN Blended Learning Model

An exemplar subject site in the Learning Management System (LMS) was developed to provide a high level of guidance in the structure and organisation of teaching resources. The 2016 event included teaching staff from outside the discipline to speak on identified key topics such as quiz-embedded video and active learning techniques for lectures and practical sessions.

> The best thing about the Boot Camp was the opportunity to play with some of the programs i.e. Camtasia Studio, GoSoapBox. Small groups allowed for greater depth of discussion into each other's subjects which would not have been possible with a larger group. - Boot Camp 2016 participant survey comment

Boot Camp 2017: A Culture of Continuous Improvement

Planning for the third annual Boot Camp is underway and will involve 3rd Year Subject Coordinators. Participants from the previous events will be asked to share their experiences for the design of the next Boot Camp. An important element of the 3-year Boot Camp plan is being responsive to change and building a culture of continuous improvement through the systematic engagement of successive cohorts of Year Level Subject Coordinators.

Running your own Boot Camp

What do you need to do to plan for, prepare and deliver your own Boot Camp? Provide a vision – how will your approach to blended learning solve the big problems faced by both educators and administrators of your course? Do your homework - build your Boot Camp around educationally sound frameworks or models. Anticipate common challenges that participants may express when encountering new ways of teaching and have evidence to hand to support your ideas. Model god practice - deliver active sessions with carefully planned individual and group activities. Use supporting resources that represent the practice you are seeking to encourage. Bring in experienced educators from within the discipline to share examples of positive learning and teaching outcomes in blended environments. At the end of the day the Boot Camp experience should be challenging but enjoyable.

References

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Salmon, G. (2015) *Carpe Diem Learning Design: Preparation and Workshop.* http://www.gillysalmon.com/carpe-diem.html

Note: All published papers are refereed, having undergone a double-blind peer-review process.