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Face-to-face, print-based or e-learning? A case study of ICT integration in alternative instructional modalities at the University of Swaziland

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Abstract

This study seeks to establish key differences in pedagogical practices associated with and facilitated by different modalities of course delivery. These are: face-to-face instruction in a traditional university lecture-based environment; print-based course delivery, whereby off-campus distance learning students attend face-to-face lectures and tutorials on campus from time-to-time, and Moodle-based online course delivery integrated into the lecture and tutorial-based environments.

The key aspect of the study concerns changing pedagogy as a consequence of the introduction of online learning tools within the traditional delivery modalities. I investigate the nature of and extent to which a Moodle platform has been introduced into the traditional face-to-face teaching and learning situation. This is done to ascertain exactly how the pedagogies established and practiced within the traditional delivery modalities are recontextualised in the digital delivery modality. Recontextualisation in this context refers to how the curriculum and pedagogic practice are transformed when interpreted and delivered by instructors to both full-time and distance education students through the three teaching and learning delivery modalities used at UNISWA. The extent of the recontextualisation is accounted for through an experiential case study of four different instances in which the same course is taught by the same instructor to the two student groups. The content and aim of each course is identical, but the pedagogy is not intended by each instructor to be the same in each case. This scenario provided a distinctive, perhaps even unique, opportunity to study the recontextualisation of pedagogic content, pedagogic practices, and assessment practices in a controlled manner across the three modalities.

The research goal was realised by employing a multiple-case study design where four faculty staff members completed a 36 item Likert scales type questionnaire. On the basis of a content analysis of this limited quantitative data, each instructor was interviewed in-depth on their pedagogical practices to establish what lay beneath their beliefs in teaching and learning and espoused practices. Key themes were identified and continuous comparison was executed to analyse the transcribed questionnaire data against the interview data. I

strengthened the qualitative aspect of this study by means of documentary analysis of course texts ranging from printed course learning materials, such as; hand outs, modules and Moodle web pages. I also conducted, recorded and transcribed face-to-face as well as content and learning pathway (Moodle) observations, to once more contrast enacted pedagogic practice against espoused pedagogic beliefs.

I use Bernstein's (1990, 2000) theory of pedagogic discourse extensively, particularly his notions of classification and framing principles. Strong classification (+C), *s*pecifically in the case of this study, means the more there is reference to online lessons, materials, assignments, feedback and so on or use of e-learning in face-to-face instruction, the more e-learning is integrated into the traditional modalities of teaching. In the same way, weak classification (-C) denotes that the more face-to-face and e-learning are kept apart, the less integration of e-learning into traditional modalities of teaching is taking place. Likewise, the framing principle relates to the transmission of knowledge through pedagogic practices. Strong framing (+F) is used to indicate a visible pedagogic practice that is traditional and therefore opposed to a constructivists approach expected when teaching distance education students and when using e-learning. Weak framing (-F) is applied to indicate an invisible pedagogic practice that is closely related to the mandated constructivist approach.

The research findings answered the research question of whether an instructor's pedagogic practice remains unchanged whichever delivery modality is used. Bernstein's classification and framing principles are employed to check and establish the instructor's pedagogical practice and provide the framework for presenting the main findings of this study. With the exception of one out of four case study instructors, the practice is strong classification and framing (+C/F) throughout. This reflects that the traditional approach is predominantly applied in the classroom. This study thus recommends that the multiple pedagogical approaches should be acknowledged and applied in all teaching and learning.

Index Words: Pedagogic discourse, Recontextualised, E-learning, Blended learning, Classification principle, Framing principle, Pedagogic practice, Pedagogic devices