



## From face-to-face teaching to online teaching: Pedagogical transitions

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**Abstract:** This paper will share the experiences of two instructors as they moved from teaching in a face-to-face environment to blended teaching and then to online teaching. It will describe the four-year journey and shed light on the issues, perspectives and practices as the instructors reflected on the changes to their pedagogical practice and the resulting online student engagement. Data included three 1-hour interviews and an analysis of online discussion postings. The instructors reflected on their values, beliefs and assumptions about teaching and learning. As higher education has embraced online education as a way to reduce costs, increase flexibility, and enhance access to students it is important to gain an understanding of the perceptions of instructors moving into online teaching. This study found a change in the beliefs and teaching presence of the instructors from their initial resistance to online teaching to an approach which is mindful of the student experience and promotes a dialogical approach to online learning.

**Keywords:** online teaching; teaching presence; changing pedagogical practice

### Introduction

The infusion of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) into learning and teaching has occurred in all sectors of education. It has changed the nature of face-to-face (f2f) teaching and enabled the rapid growth of blended and online courses. ICTs offer new opportunities but also new challenges for both instructors and students. As the number of online courses grows it is essential that we have an understanding of the roles and practices of an effective online teacher. Laurillard (2002) asserted that “if there is to be innovation and change in university teaching—as the new technology requires, as the knowledge industry requires, and as students demand—then it follows that academics must become researchers in teaching” (p. 22).

This paper explores the journey of two academics as they moved from face-to-face teaching to blended teaching and then to teaching fully online courses. It is a result of academics researching their teaching as recommended by Laurillard (2002). The study investigated how this journey initiated changes in the beliefs and pedagogical practice of the two academics from 2007 - 2011.

## Changing teaching spaces

The changing nature of both the student body and available technologies have required academics to change their approaches to teaching to gain improved learning outcomes (Hativa & Goodyear, 2001). Academics who have commonly taught in a face-to-face environment are under pressure to embed ICTs into their face-to-face teaching and to work in blended and online modes. The literature is inconsistent in describing blended learning largely because it has been enacted in practice in a variety of ways. Blended learning may also be known as flexible learning, mixed mode, or hybrid delivery. Elliot Masie (2002) defined blended learning as “the use of two or more distinct methods of training” (p. 59). In their publication which examined the extent and quality of online education in the United States, Allen and Seaman (2003) quantified a blended course as “having between 30% and 80% of the course content delivered online” and an online course as one where “at least 80% of the course content [is] delivered online” (p. 6).

Technologies enable instructors, students and others to participate in teaching and learning at a time and place convenient to them. Universities have been successfully offering distance education for many decades, where teaching and learning occurred ‘off campus’ (Oliver, 2002). Coldeway (1995) discussed four different approaches to using technology in higher education. However, these approaches were established over fifteen years ago and technology has developed significantly since that time, therefore these approaches should be viewed from a more contemporary perspective.

1. Same time, Same place – This is a traditional face-to-face approach where the instructor and learners are in the same geographical location at the same time. However, today some people might consider using synchronous technology tools such as Wimba and Elluminate, or Skype to interact with others at the same time in the same virtual space. This virtual space replicates many aspects of face-to-face spaces with all participants having access to the same resources, files and synchronous discussion at the same time.
2. Different time, Same place – Participants in the learning and teaching process interact in the same space but at a time they choose; for example, in asynchronous online discussions.
3. Same time, Different place – This could be viewed as individual students working independently but at the same time, not located at the same place. Or today, it might be considered to be parallel to Same time, Same place where students from geographical different places connect synchronously using different mediums, such as video conferencing, phone, Wimba, or Skype.
4. Different time, Different place – Learners and instructors are separated geographically and also by time. Email is an example of this, where the participants choose the time and place of the asynchronous interaction.

These changing teaching and learning spaces are impacted by the use of technology. The move from traditional face-to-face teaching toward technology enabled, blended, and fully online teaching initiates a role shift. This paper explores the changing beliefs, roles and the changing nature of academics work as a result of inserting technology into teaching and learning spaces.

## The changing role of the instructor

The transition to online teaching and learning from a traditional face-to-face approach challenges the expectations and roles of both instructors and learners. For some instructors, when they change the place of teaching, they feel that their identities are under threat. Many instructors see their professional identity being tied to their past face-to-face teaching where they had a high level of expertise. “[I]f educators are changing teaching places, they need to redefine themselves in light of the change in landscape” (Meloncon, 2007, pp. 37-38).

Redefining professional identity and teaching practices takes time. Without training many instructors try to replicate existing course design and pedagogical practices when they move from face-to-face teaching to blended or online teaching (Bonk & Dennen, 2003). The replication of traditional methods does not capitalize on the dynamic nature of a technologically enhanced teaching and learning environment. Some academics fail “make a transformational shift in their approach to teaching from one of disseminating information to one of creating learning environments where students co-construct knowledge through interactions” (Vaughan, 2010, p. 61) and they are under pressure to re-examine their philosophy and their pedagogy.

The move from face-to-face to blended and online teaching is quite confronting. The nature of teaching, roles and workload distribution changes as instructors teach in blended and/or online courses (Coppola, Hiltz, &

Rotter, 2002; Young, 2002). Many experienced or expert face-to-face teachers find themselves as novices or beginners when first teaching online. In some cases it could result in a resistance towards online teaching (McQuiggan, 2007).

A major challenge, identified by Yang and Cornelious (2005), when instructors move from a largely teacher directed face-to-face environment to an online environment, is to redesign learning towards a constructivist approach. This often results in a change in: roles and responsibilities; use of technology; relationships; presence; and a perceived lack of prestige.

Presence can be defined as “the ability to automatically identify the status and availability of communication partners” (Hauswirth et al., 2010, p. 1) and provides an impression to others that you ‘are there’ or present. Teaching presence has been defined by Anderson, Rourke, Garrison and Archer as “the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes” (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, & Archer, 2001, p. 5). They go on to explain that teaching presence involves three key roles: instructional design and organisation; facilitation of discourse; and direct instruction. The indicators for each teaching presence category are presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Teaching presence categories and indicators**

Categories	Indicators
Instructional design and organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• setting the curriculum;</li> <li>• designing methods;</li> <li>• establishing time parameters;</li> <li>• utilising medium effectively;</li> <li>• establishing netiquette; and</li> <li>• making macro-level comments about course content.</li> </ul>
Facilitating discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying area of agreement/disagreement;</li> <li>• seeking to reach consensus/understanding;</li> <li>• encouraging, acknowledging, or reinforcing student contributions;</li> <li>• setting the climate for learning;</li> <li>• drawing in participants, and prompting discussion; and</li> <li>• assessing the efficacy of the process.</li> </ul>
Direct instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• presenting content/questions;</li> <li>• focusing the discussion on specific issues;</li> <li>• summarising the discussion;</li> <li>• confirming understanding through assessment and explanatory feedback;</li> <li>• diagnosing misconceptions;</li> <li>• injecting knowledge from diverse sources; and</li> <li>• responding to technical concerns.</li> </ul>

Source: Modified from Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000)

The indicators listed in Table 1 provide examples of what an instructor does within each of the three categories or roles of teaching presence. Instructional design and organisation refers to the planning, management, and structural decisions made in a course (usually prior to the students entering). When effectively facilitating discourse academics are guiding and developing productive conversations so as to deepen students’ knowledge. Direct instruction requires deep discipline knowledge to enable the shaping of learning experiences and to diagnose students’ misconceptions.

The categories of teaching presence might be seen by students as the visible actions or verbal contributions that the instructor makes throughout the course. Teaching presence is an indicator of the quality and quantity of the leadership and the interactions made by the instructor. It is the role of the instructor to provide intellectual leadership for the course and shape the learning experiences of the learners through the teaching presence categories of design and organisation, facilitation of discourse, and direct instruction.

Technology in learning and teaching does bring with it a change to the role of the instructor and the nature of teaching. This is a concern if instructors are ill equipped to deal with the changing nature of teaching online

because teaching presence does impact on student satisfaction in online courses (Shea, Frederickson, Pickett, & Pelz, 2003; Shea, Pickett, & Pelz, 2004). Table 2 below presents different researchers' views on the role of the online teacher. From this summary it could be suggested that effective online teachers need a range of skills and knowledges, particularly in the areas of: management; pedagogical approaches which will effectively enable the design, facilitation and assessment of the course; content knowledge; ability to support the social and emotional well-being of the students; and technical skills.

**Table 2: Online Teaching Roles**

Berge (1995)	Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000)	Berge and Collins (2000)	Goodyear et al. (2001)	Morris, Xu and Finnegan (2005)	Weltzer-Ward (2011)
Managerial		Manager	Manager/ Administrator		Managing
Pedagogical	Design and Organisation	Editor	Designer	Course customiser	
			Assessor	Grading and Assessment	
	Facilitating discourse	Discussion leader	Facilitator	Course facilitator/ Process facilitator	Guiding discourse
Social		Firefighter/ Filter	Adviser/ Counsellor		Supporting
	Direct instruction	Content expert	Content facilitator		Instructing
Technical		Helper and marketer	Technologist		

Table 2 presents a chronology of different points of view on the role of online teachers. These different perspectives of the online teacher indicate that although researchers have used different labels for the roles of online teachers, the common types of activities include management, design, organisation, facilitation, and instruction. Interestingly, the process of facilitating discussion appears to be a key role when teaching in the online space as it explicitly appears in five of the six frameworks summarized in Table 2. In general, the different roles presented are not specific to online teaching but are the visible elements of teaching in any environment, although how the roles are enacted are different in face-to-face teaching when compared to online teaching. It is through these roles that an instructor guides student learning and improves the student learning journey with the aim of enhancing student learning outcomes.

The increase of technologies in education, to enhance learning and teaching, means that it is important to understand the perspectives of academics as they travel the continuum of teaching with and through ICTs from face-to-face teaching to online teaching. It is important also to improve the quality of the learning experiences and student satisfaction while academics 'find their feet' in these new learning and teaching environments.

## Methodology

This paper will present a case study of two academics as they moved from face-to-face to blended and online teaching. Data were collected over four years using archived online discussions and three 1-hour semi-structured interviews. Participants were interviewed when they designed and taught their first blended course (after having significant experience in teaching face-to-face). After the conclusion of semester the interview data and the data from the online discussions were presented to the instructors in a second interview for them to comment on. A third interview was conducted after they had taught a course fully online. The constant comparison method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was used to analyse the data, looking for recurrent and emergent themes to identify patterns. The online discussion archives were analysed to identify which categories of teaching presence the instructors' online posts were aligned to.

To build an understanding of the change that academics experience when the when moving from face-to-face to blended and online teaching the following questions were explored:

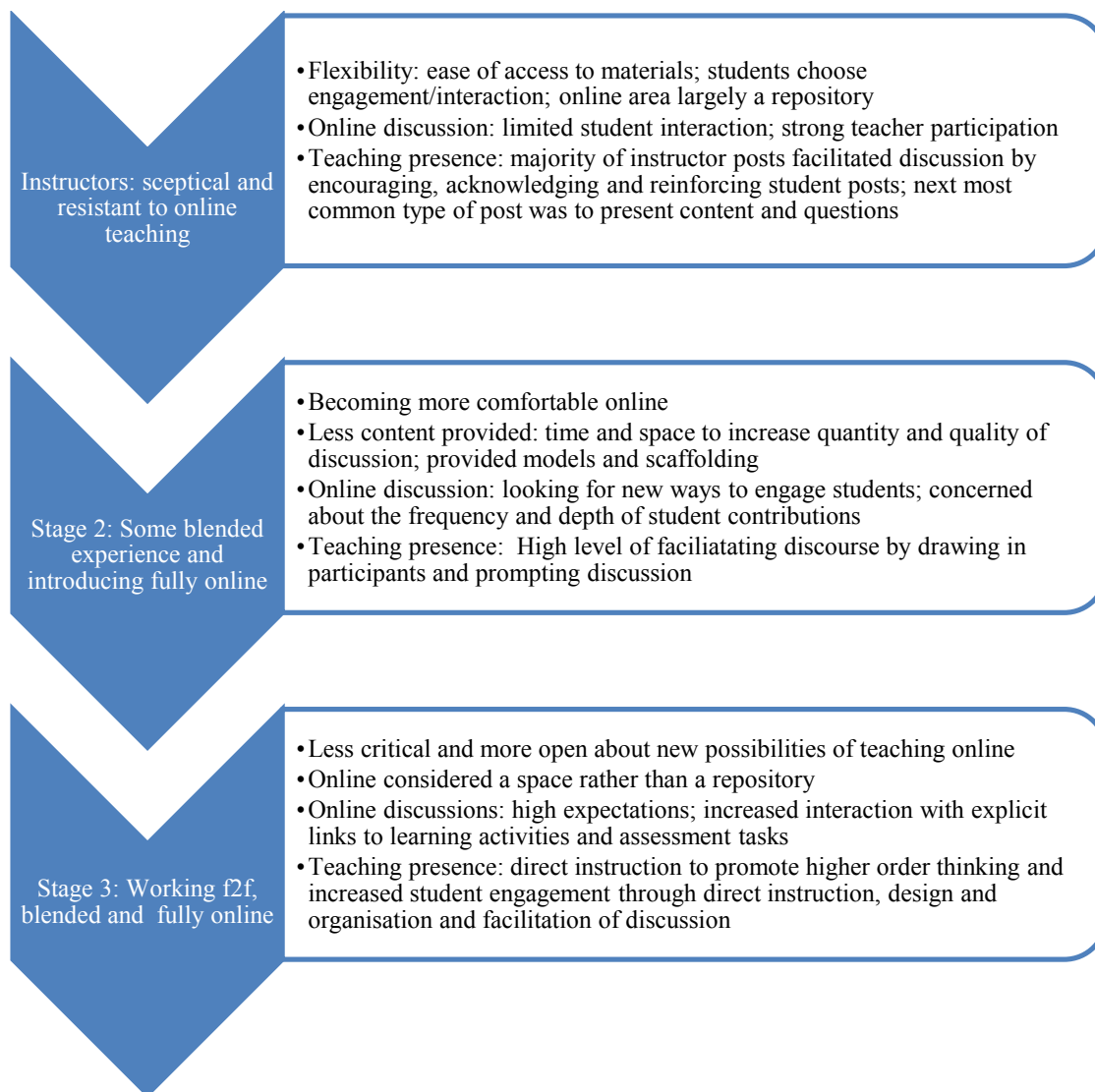
- What change in pedagogical practice did academics report when moving from face-to-face to blended and online teaching?
- How do the perceptions of instructors change over time when moving from face-to-face to blended and online teaching?
- What influenced change as the instructor moved from face-to-face to blended and online modes of teaching?

This research was set in a regional university where academics were pressured to move from face-to-face teaching towards blended and fully online teaching to accommodate the increased economically, geographic, socially and culturally diverse student population.

The first instructor, Anna, was an early childhood educator, who had also worked in primary schools. She had also worked as a fitness instructor and had managed her own personal training business prior to becoming an academic. The second instructor, Sean, was an enthusiastic ICT user who had been: a multi-aged primary teacher 1 – 7; a small school primary principal; an advisory visiting teacher for intellectual impairment; a support teacher for learning difficulties; and a guidance counsellor for years 1 – 12 and in alternative education programs before joining the university.

### **Data analysis and findings:**

This section will describe the change in perceptions and in pedagogical practices as the two instructors moved from teaching face-to-face to blended and online teaching over a four-year period. Figure 1 indicates pedagogical change at three junctures of the instructors' journeys. Teaching presence in this figure refers to the most common types of instructor online posts when analysed using the categories provided by Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000) as described in Table 1 above.



**Figure 1: Instructor changes in perceptions and modifications of pedagogy**

Stage one was when the instructors, who were highly experienced in face-to-face teaching, were first introduced to blended teaching. At this stage they were concerned with the student expectations of them online and in particular, the perception that they were available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Both instructors were initially sceptical and resistant to including online elements to their face-to-face course. Other researchers have also found that instructors often resist changing their teaching approaches to integrate ICTs into their practice, most commonly due to lack of training, lack of support, or time pressures (Finley & Hartman, 2004; Garrison & Anderson, 2000; Pajo & Wallace, 2001).

The instructors did see the benefits of flexibility for students studying in blended courses. Their students had easy and ongoing access to a wider range of materials and they were also able to choose when and how they would interact with the course content, their instructor, and their peers. At this beginning stage the online space was largely a repository of documents or links to websites with incidental use of discussion forums.

The online discussions had limited student interaction, yet strong instructor participation. The online discussions were teacher dominated with many public one-to-one conversations between the instructor and a student rather than many-to-many discourse. The instructors responded immediately to student posts. This supports the research of Vandergrift (2002) who commented that “[i]t was difficult for [the] teacher not to respond immediately to a truly brilliant insight or, on the contrary, to confusion, muddled thinking, or misinformation” (p. 83). The instructors were concerned that the discussion was more formal and there was a

permanent record and this impacted the way they contributed to the online discussion.

The majority of the instructors' posts in online discussions were those which encouraged, acknowledged and reinforced student posts; within teaching presence these are categorised as facilitating discussion posts. This was in contrast to the research of Morris et al., (2005) who found that beginning instructors rarely provided acknowledgment or feedback to the students. The next most common type of posts were those where the instructor presented content and questions, and this falls in the direct instruction category of teaching presence.

After the initial interviews and online discussion forums were analysed the stage one data were presented to the instructors. After viewing the data analysis to this point both instructors made immediate changes to their practice. For example, Anna commented that rather than be "quick to get in and respond to students immediately" she started to "sit back to see if other students respond" and she also began to invite students back into the conversation.

The second stage in their journey was when the instructors had some experience teaching in blended courses and they were about to design and teach a fully online course. The instructors had increased confidence in their ability to complement their face-to-face work online and had made changes to their pedagogical approach. They felt they were 'letting go' of their old ways of teaching and started looking for new ways to engage students. When discussing student engagement online Sean questioned, "How do I get them in?" The instructors were exploring interaction online.

Both of the instructors regularly participated in a range of professional development activities to gain knowledge, experience and different perspectives of online teaching. They actively searched for relevant professional readings and engaged in pedagogical conversations with other instructors experienced in online teaching. They also increased their personal reflection on blended teaching and learning, especially when beginning to design and develop the new online courses. Both Sean and Anna have found that they presented less content within their courses in order to provide students with more time and space, with the aim to increase quantity and quality of the online discussion. Sean suggested that "the more I pour in the less room there is for others to contribute".

In the face-to-face and online elements of their blended courses the instructors provided models and scaffolding. They made links between the face-to-face and online activities and the online discussions to increase higher-order thinking and to promote enhanced student engagement. Both instructors had success using open-ended questions of a contentious nature or real world issues as stimulus for online discussions. However, the instructors were still concerned about the frequency and depth of student contributions to online discussions. They started to wait for students to respond rather than stepping in immediately and they also provided less detailed responses.

During stage two, their teaching presence included specific links to netiquette through direct instruction. While facilitating discourse they drew in the participants and prompted further discussion. They continued to encourage, acknowledge, or reinforce student contributions while also inviting the students back into the discourse.

During the third stage, the instructors were teaching in face-to-face, blended and fully online courses. Anna stated that she was "more comfortable working online". Looking back Sean revealed that he was "embarrassed about what [he] used to do online". He noted a marked change in his online pedagogy and his attitude towards teaching online. At this stage both instructors found they were less critical and more open to new ideas about teaching through technology. Sean found he became "experimental and curious about what is possible in the online space" and he is "now looking for ways to address barriers to access and participation in the curriculum" when teaching online. Both Anna and Sean have seen "quality outcomes" from their past experiences which has helped them develop confidence, they have embraced the challenge of teaching online, and they continue to look for ways to improve their practice.

One of the big changes at this stage was that the instructors were "mindful of the online learner experience". They also found that while working in three different modes they were able to "translate learning from one mode to another" to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of their teaching. Anna reflected that she was "continuously thinking of ways of engaging students online".

The instructors considered that they had changed their concept of the online area to one of a teaching space rather than a repository. Sean reflected that he "now questions what type of pedagogy can be applied to the space. This new space makes pedagogical demands on the teacher". Anna suggested that she "needs to re-think

curriculum design” for the space and also the pedagogy of the space. Sean suggested that he needed

“to be mindful of the space. Space affords and demands different pedagogies. Just as in face-to-face teaching when you change the layout of the classroom and organization of the desks you need to teach in different ways and students will interact in different ways. The same occurs in an online space”.

When using the online areas as a space rather than a repository; Sean was particularly interested in looking at ways to improve interaction. Both instructors aimed to have an ongoing post/response cycle between students rather than teacher-dominated or teacher-led discussions. At this stage they had higher expectations of themselves and their students in online discussions. They found that in online discussions students and instructors have the opportunity to sit back, reflect and think before replying – giving a considered response. Sean observed that participants “don’t need to shoot from the hip; we can all refer back to learning materials etc. before responding” and other researchers (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001; Meyer, 2004; Vaughan & Garrison, 2005) have had similar findings.

Sean also identified four different modes of interaction between the participants that he has tried to encourage. Interestingly Sean’s types of interactions expand on two of the interactive relationships presented by Moore (1989): Learner – Teacher interaction and Learner – Learner interaction.

- Instructor interacting with students;
- Students initiating interaction with instructor;
- Instructor facilitating student-to-student interaction (teacher led); and
- Students’ initiating student-to-student interaction.

In stage three, the instructors focused on a dialogical approach to teaching and learning online. The online discussion forums were established with specific expectations of how they might “contribute to teaching and learning activities”. This has impacted on the design and management of other courses. Anna suggested her online discussion forums “were much more productive. Students share their personal philosophy and appreciate the opinions of others”. Both instructors have found that higher-order thinking can be made more explicit in online discussions. This finding is supported by Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000) who suggested that “the reflective and explicit nature of the written word encourages discipline and rigor in our thinking and communicating” (p. 91). The instructors tried to encourage critical thinking responses in the discussion forums where students’ thinking is more visible. Anna commented that she also “uses Bloom’s thinking taxonomy to audit her courses” to track the types of learning and assessment activities that form part of the course.

The instructors both had strong feelings about their need to be ‘present’ in the online space just as they do in face-to-face classes. Sean went on to comment that “it is not just about being present in the online space, it is about what we do when we are online that makes a difference”. This aligns with past research which found that “there is growing evidence that teaching presence is a significant determinant of student satisfaction, perceived learning and sense of community” (Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, & Fung, 2010, p. 32). Students expect their instructors to be present online and these two instructors also felt it was key to successful online teaching.

Both instructors suggested that they have been on a “steep and ongoing learning curve”. This was especially obvious when they moved from blended teaching to fully online teaching. They have both been adjusting their philosophy and practice. Based on their experience over the four years, they saw a change in role from content provider to facilitator. This change from “intellect-on-stage and mentor towards a learning catalyst” (Volery & Lord, 2000, pp. 222-223) was not a change in their underlying philosophy, however they have both reconceptualised what effective online learning and teaching might entail and this resulted in a significant and ongoing change in pedagogical practice. Interestingly, Sean suggested that he finds online teaching “very demanding. It is more demanding than face-to-face teaching in terms of time and thinking required”. Other studies (Hartman, Dziuban, & Moskal, 2000; McKenzie, Waugh, Bennett, & Mims, 2002) would support his comment that many academics perceive that designing for online learning and teaching online is more time consuming than face-to-face courses.

## Outcomes

In answering the initial research question “What change in pedagogical practice did academics report when moving from face-to-face to blended and online teaching?”, this study found that there was significant change. The growth was spiral in nature: as they gained more experience in teaching blended and online courses the



instructors experienced new roles and explored the expectations of what those roles might entail while developing expertise, knowledge and skills for online pedagogy. There was a paradigm shift in how the instructors communicated with their students in online discussions and also for the ways that they designed online courses to initiate the act of learning. The instructors also took into account the student experience when designing new online courses. The focus was not limited to the experience of the instructor. Universities can't expect that instructors can and will move from being a novice educator to an expert online teacher without time, experience and support. These elements enable the instructor to develop and teach in ways that enhance the student learning journey.

The second research question asked "How do the perceptions of instructors change over time when moving from face-to-face to blended and online teaching?" When first asked to teach in a blended mode the instructors were resistant. There was initial scepticism regarding the ability to gain comparable learning outcomes in blended or online environments when compared to face-to-face teaching. During the four-year journey while preparing to teach in blended and online courses the instructors underwent a transformation in teaching assumptions, beliefs and practices. After teaching in only one online course the instructors were positive in their approach to teaching online and the resulting student outcomes.

The final research question investigated "What influenced change as the instructor moved from face-to-face to blended and online modes of teaching?" This study makes clear the impact of critical reflection, dialogue and support as instructors move from the high level of comfort and expertise in face-to-face teaching to a very confronting and novice position when first teaching online. There was a progression of change which was enhanced by personal reflection and also the opportunity to see an analysis completed by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party and the opportunity to discuss it. During this study, the opportunity to discuss the data from Stage 1 provided the stimulus for instructors to reflect on their pedagogy and make immediate changes to their practice. It required intellectual courage for the instructors to be involved in this research and to have someone else analyse their online discussions and then discuss how they constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed their philosophy and practice. The instructors also searched for professional development and professional readings to support their pedagogical journey.

With only two participants from one regional university, within the discipline of teacher education, it means that the outcomes of this study are highly individualised and there is limited ability to generalise. However, these findings can provide the opportunity for future research and institutional discussions. Future research may explore the journey of other instructors across a range of disciplines and institutions. Also it would be useful to practitioners for research that investigates the role and expectations of students, particularly for those whose education has recently moved from face-to-face to fully online.

## **Conclusion**

This paper explored the journey of two instructors as they moved from face-to-face teaching to blended teaching to online teaching over a four-year period. The instructors experienced a change in role and also a significant change in comfort level and acceptance of the effectiveness of online teaching and learning. The move to teaching online was a catalyst for the instructors to question and reflect on their philosophy and practices about teaching. What worked for the instructors in the traditional face-to-face classroom was not as effective in the online space.

As the work of academics moves from a largely face-to-face mode to blended and online modes they should be provided the opportunity to critically question their own practices and discuss with their peers the adoption of new pedagogical practices for the new teaching spaces. This may provide a better understanding of teaching and learning processes in the online environment. For this type of dialogue to be successful there needs to be a climate of support, the participants need to be receptive to feedback from their peers, and they should engage meaningfully in reflective practice.

Moving some or all of the learning online requires changes to both pedagogy and practice to ensure effective learning outcomes. "The challenge is to systematically explore the integration of pedagogical ideas and new communications technology that will advance the evolution of higher education as opposed to reinforcing existing practices" (Garrison et al., 2010, p. 31). For many instructors their attention has not yet shifted from the technology tools to the pedagogical practices and use of the tools. This has an impact not only on instructor identity but also on the effectiveness of the teaching and the perceptions and satisfaction of the learners.

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**Please cite as:** Redmond, P. (2011). From face-to-face teaching to online teaching: Pedagogical transitions. In G. Williams, P. Statham, N. Brown & B. Cleland (Eds.), *Changing Demands, Changing Directions. Proceedings ascilite Hobart 2011*. (pp.1050-1060). <https://doi.org/10.14742/apubs.2011.1724>

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