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Evaluating Blended Learning: The Missing Dimension

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- Peter Mazohl (European Foundation for Quality in Blended Learning, Vienna)

Project development 1

The purpose of the initial project was to understand which Flexible and Distributed Learning (FDL) techniques generate positive student engagement during the first FDL delivery of a traditional post-graduate module.

Project development 2

Extended to use two contrasting modules as case studies. One involved the delivery of a module taught on a second cycle Master's degree; the other was designed for students on a first cycle Bachelor's degree. In both cases this was the first delivery of the materials in this format and this research forms part of the continuing development of the modules and will inform the development of other modules.

Project development 3

- High School (between 14 and 15 years old)
- A special teaching unit for the subject “Presentation Techniques and Project Management” was selected and restructured to a Blended learning course. The teaching unit was not simply transferred to a Blended learning course, but completely restructured from the onsite teaching.
- A short course with three onsite teachings (start, presentation with intermediate assessment and final presentation and assessment) with two online teachings based on partner or group work.

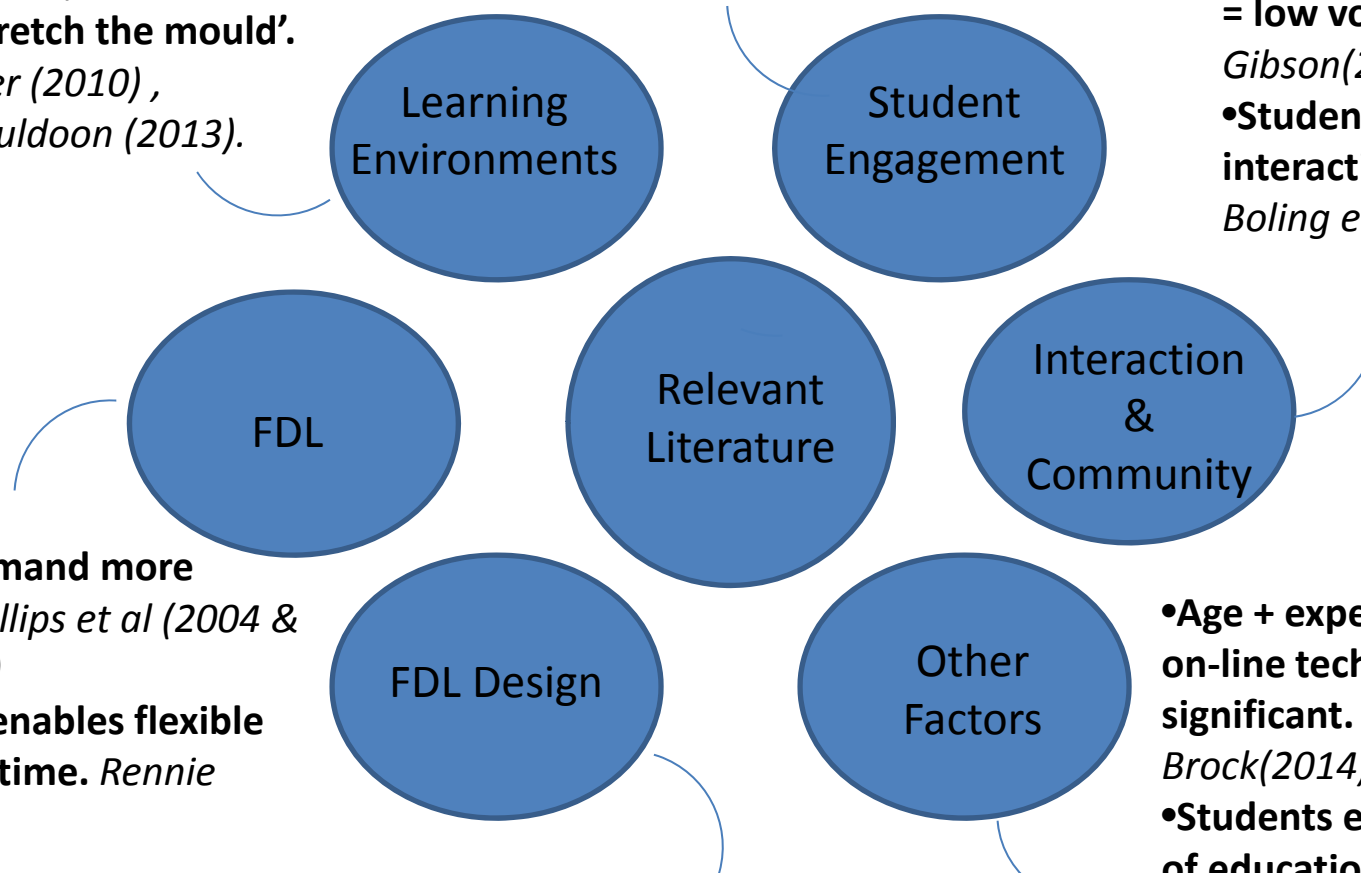
Project development 3 contd.

- Transfer of onsite teaching to a Blended Learning sequence
- Implementation of that Blended Learning sequence using the quality framework developed in the BladEdu Project
- Pedagogical access by learner-centered teaching

- **Non-verbal communication.** *Gibson (2013)*
- **Emerging pedagogy required.** *Boling et al (2012)*
- **Currently 'stretch the mould'.** *Holley & Oliver (2010), Bricknell & Muldoon (2013).*

- **A psychological investment in their learning.** *Dietz-Uhler & Hurn (2013)*
- **Students perform higher level learning behaviours.** *Li et al (2014)*

- **Interaction is part of engagement.** *Dietz-Uhler & Hurn (2013)*
- **Student led interaction = low vol high qual.** *Gibson(2013)*
- **Student / lecturer interaction crucial.** *Boling et al (2012)*



- **Students demand more flexibility.** *Phillips et al (2004 & Rennie (2003)*
- **Technology enables flexible distance and time.** *Rennie (2003)*

- **Alignment in design.** *Biggs & Tang (2013)*
- **B-R-G Model = full cohesion in design .** *El-khalili & El-Ghalayini (2014).*

- **Age + experience with on-line technology is significant.** *Simonds & Brock(2014)*
- **Students expectations of education and their ability to control their space.** *Holley & Oliver (2010) .*

Postgraduate focus group

- Recall of a range of FDL techniques was strong; the quiz, the voice over power-point, the practice examples with model answers and the discussion forums were mentioned without prompt.
- Participants valued the ability to receive feedback, either through the quiz which provided instant feedback, the model answers which allowed participants to self-assess, through the discussion forums or from the lecturer
- Assessment Q&A Discussion Forum enabled them to support each other and provided a space to ask questions, “it felt like the whole group was supporting each other.” (S4) and was “really nice when other students responded”. (S3)
- Even those who didn’t participate in the discussion would go on and read what others’ had said and also felt comforted that there was a facility they could turn to should they need it.

ALP Focus Group

- Self-selected members met at Ambleside whilst there for workshops
- Students advised that the focus group was exploratory in nature. Asked to recall how they interact with various technologies used in teaching and to work with each other.
- Recall of types of technology was unprompted.



- Facebook a “central point” ... “part of everyday life” (4 mins) “online community” (7 mins)
- Blackboard for grades (app) and as a library
- Reactions to blogs: privacy & confidence.

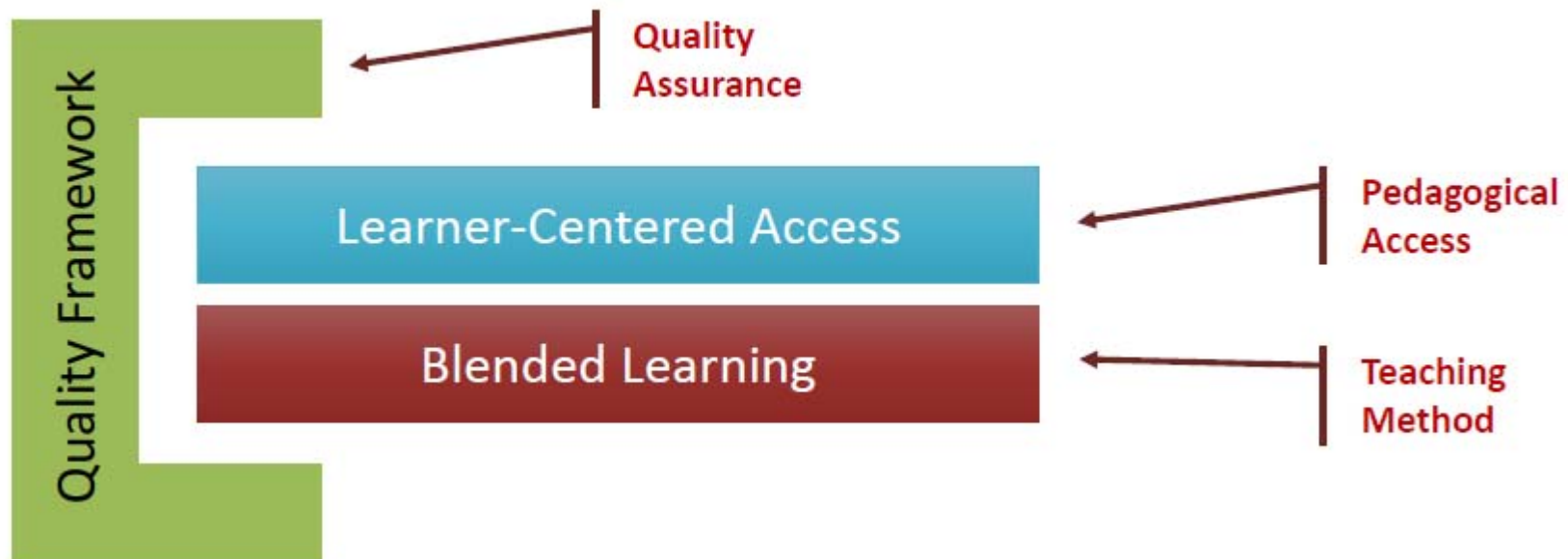
Vienna project

- Students appreciate the Blended Learning as a method
 - Learn together, not alone, and
 - Create an added value from the active learning
- On the other hand, they refuse to participate at such a learning sequence again.
- This kind of learning needs a higher level of students' engagement and forces them to do more than in pure classroom teaching.

Vienna project

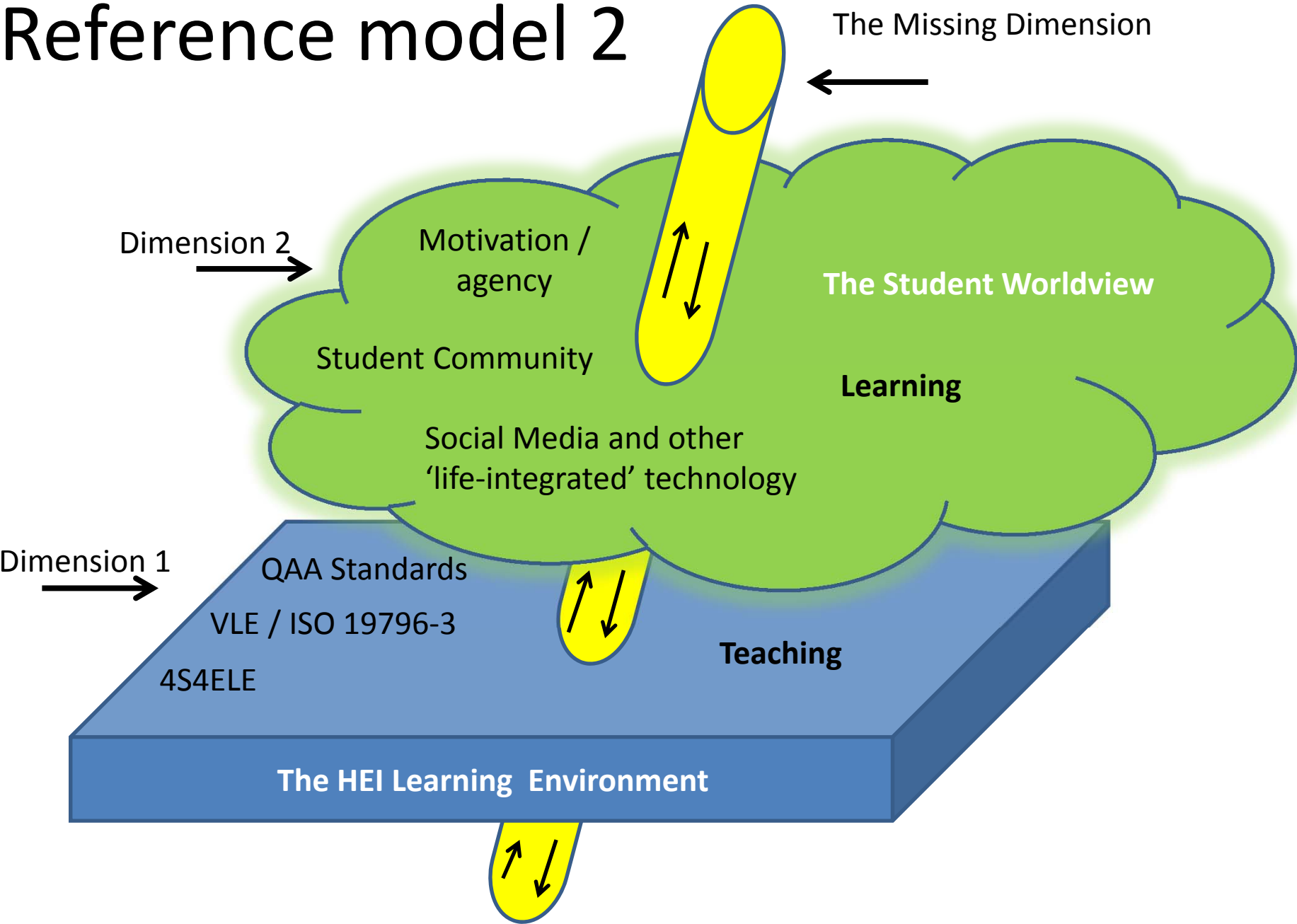
- The learning sequence was structured linear by a quite simple step-by-step structure
- Students specified the structure of the course as not well structured.
- They found the description of the course not detailed enough.
- These facts may be explained with the youth of the students.
- Donnelly (2010), Aycok (2002) and others mention a certain level of maturity of the “Blended Learner”

Reference model 1



- Blended learning as a means of transporting the pedagogy
- Evaluating the pertinence of the didactical model chosen, not just the technology

Reference model 2



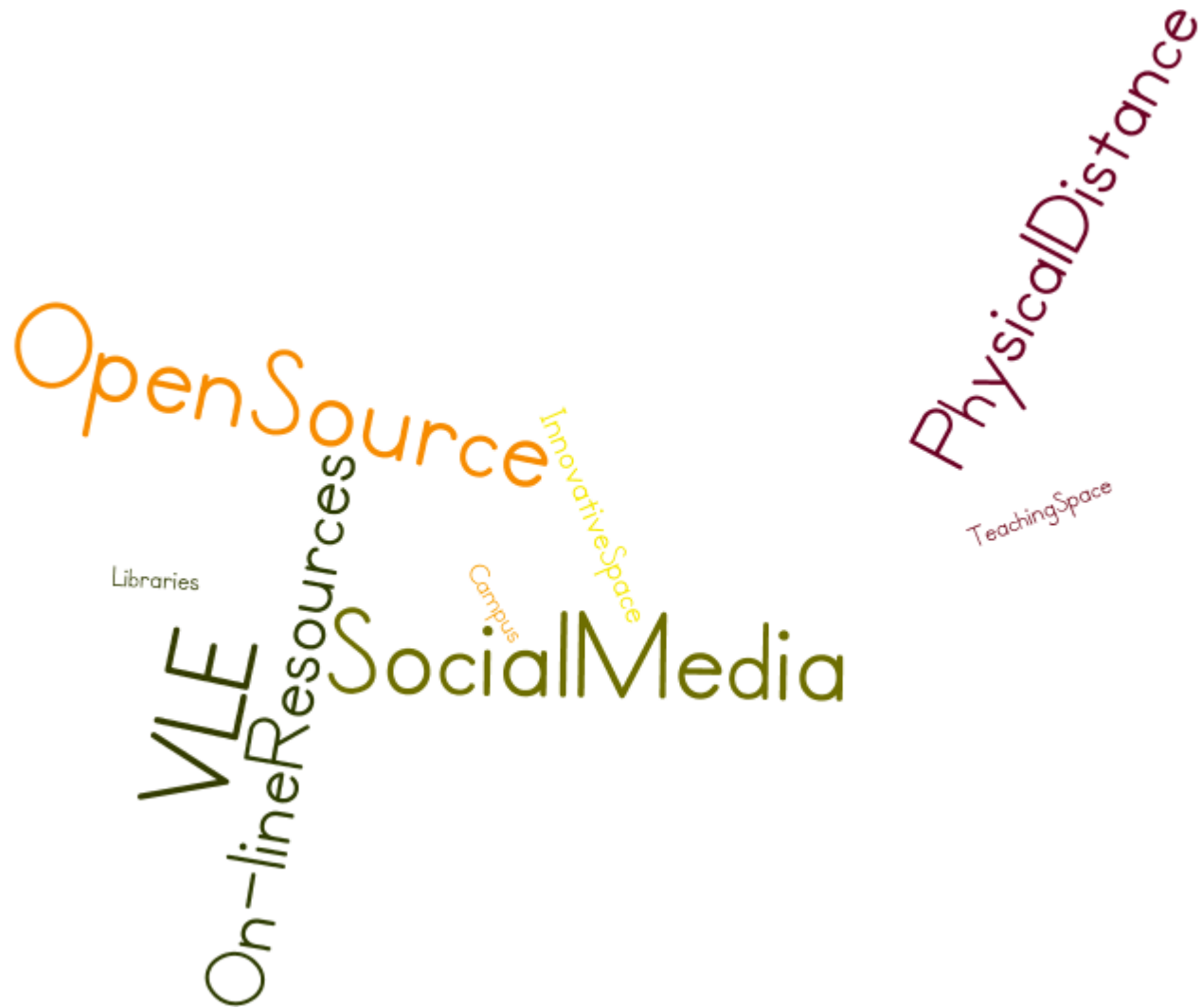
It could be argued that the 'social media' activity is a direct replacement for coffee bar conversation.

But compare the current environment with that 'coffee bar' environment and it is much more integrated into the learning environment and less within the 'control' of the HEI.

Traditional

Libraries
Structure
VLE
BooksOn-line
Order
InnovativeSpace
Subject
Classroom
StudentBar
Campus

New learning environment



Conclusions & Recommendations

Objective	Conclusion	Recommendation
1. Understand which FDL techniques derived positive student engagement.	Techniques alone did not derive positive student engagement.	Plan cohesion into the design of the module using a model like the B-R-G but also take into consideration how assessment fits the content, activity and technology. Ensure opportunity for valued interaction with tutor and peers.
2. Explore other possible FDL techniques that may be appropriate for the module.	Interactive techniques could be increased. Allow use of technology outside of University control.	There isn't a 'best' technique for enabling student engagement. It must be done in light of #1. above. Be aware of the social media that students might use, but be careful about changing the dynamic if it's working!
3. Identify which FDL techniques may be transferrable to other modules.	A wide range of techniques would be transferrable, particularly those which develop the student / tutor relationship.	The use of technology has to be deliberately designed in each case to fit the content, activity, technology and assessment.

Potential Future?

