The blending of blended learning:

An experiential approach to academic staff development

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Overview / Context

University strategic focus on blended learning – 2008 onwards

- "…systematically embed BL approaches in the teaching and learning activities of all programs…"
  - » All courses to be in "Mode 2"
- "…nurture and extend staff capabilities in the applications of BL…"
  - » Graduate Certificate in Higher Education program
  - » BL Advisors
  - » Resource development

http://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/267178/Getting_started_with_blended_learning_guide.pdf

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    - **10CP Elective course – Blended Learning**
  - » BL Advisors
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Overview / Context

An experiential approach

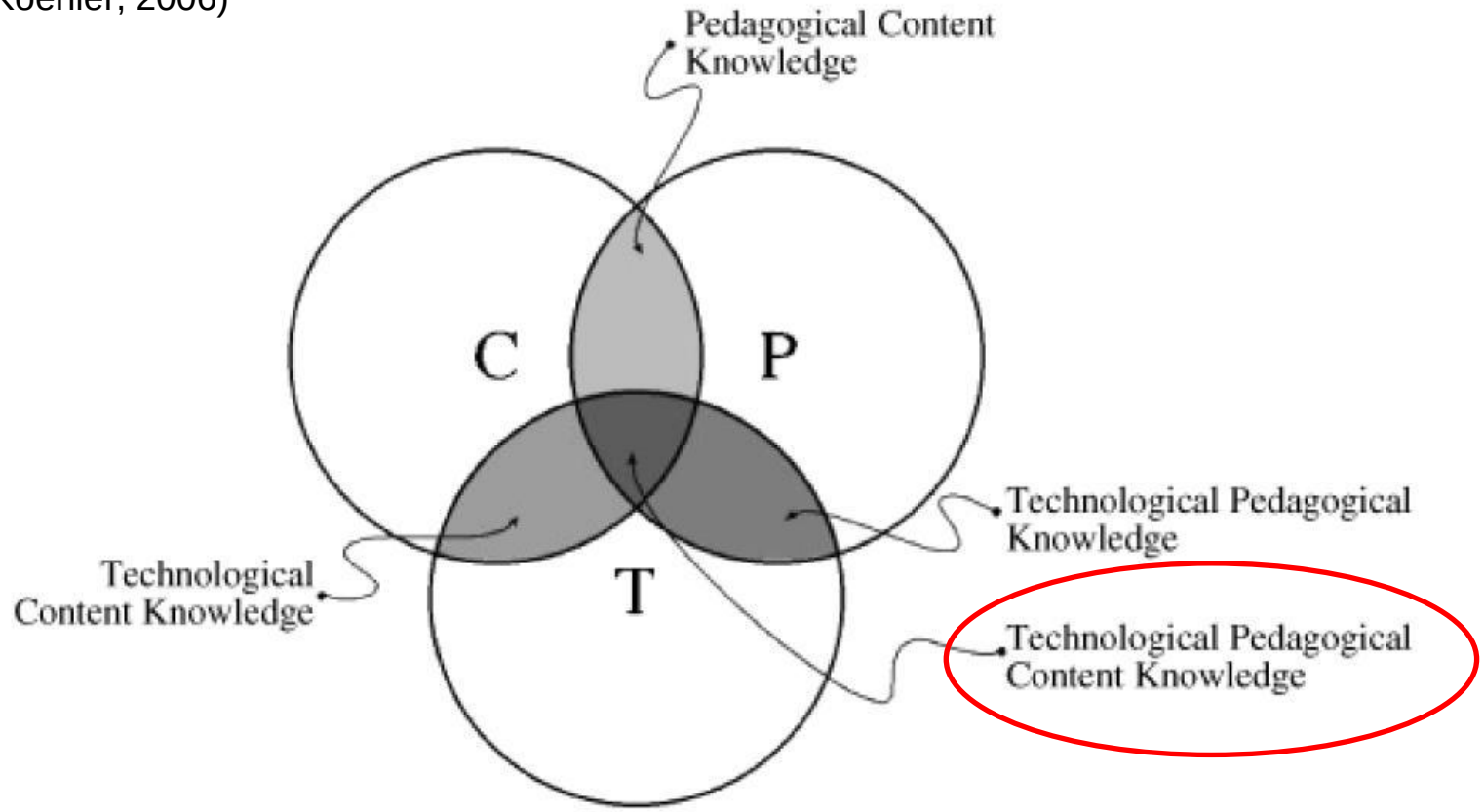
- Staff (our students) experience BL tools and activities first-hand; *and*
- Course conducted in BL mode

Evidence-based, theoretical framework

- TPCK (Technological pedagogical content knowledge)
  - » Underpinning the student's own learning
- Community of Inquiry (Garrison & Vaughan, 2007)
  - » Underpinning the design of the course
  - » Theory/content

Framework for teacher practice

- A conceptual framework for educational technology by building on Shulman's formulation of 'pedagogical content knowledge' (Mishra & Koehler, 2006)



TPCK

- Goes beyond all three components (content, pedagogy, and technology)
- Different from knowledge of a disciplinary or technology expert and also from the general pedagogical knowledge shared by teachers across disciplines
- Is the basis of good teaching with technology

> 'TPCK represents a class of knowledge that is central to teachers' work with technology. This knowledge would not typically be held by technologically proficient subject matter experts, or by technologists who know little of the subject or of pedagogy, or by teachers who know little of that subject or about technology.'
>
> (Mishra & Koehler, p.1029)

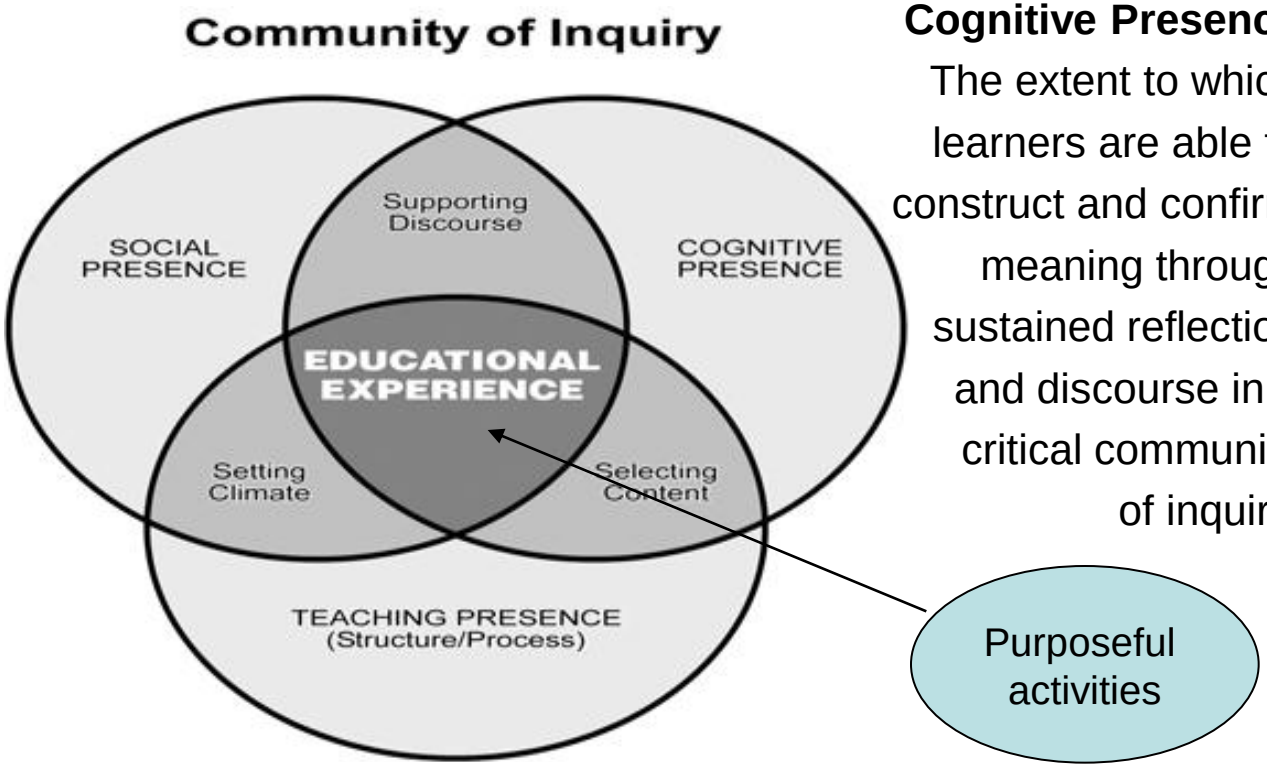
A guiding model for blending learning

The Community of Inquiry (COI) model (Garrison & Vaughan, 2007)

- A framework helps to avoid separation of theory and practice
- "…Without order and a means to construct the rationale for adopting a particular technique, we are condemned to thrash about and to randomly search for what may work with little understanding of why something was successful or not…avoids the tyranny of adopting clever techniques…Moreover, a theoretical framework…provides a means to shape practice…to reflect upon and make sense of outcomes…" (p. 13)
- Ideal educational transaction is a collaborative constructivist process that has inquiry at its core. Social interaction and collaboration shapes and tests meaning, enriching understanding and knowledge sharing.
- The importance of a community of inquiry is that, while the objective of critical reflection is intellectual autonomy, in reality**, critical reflection is "thoroughly social and communal"** (Lipman, 1991)

The Community of Inquiry model

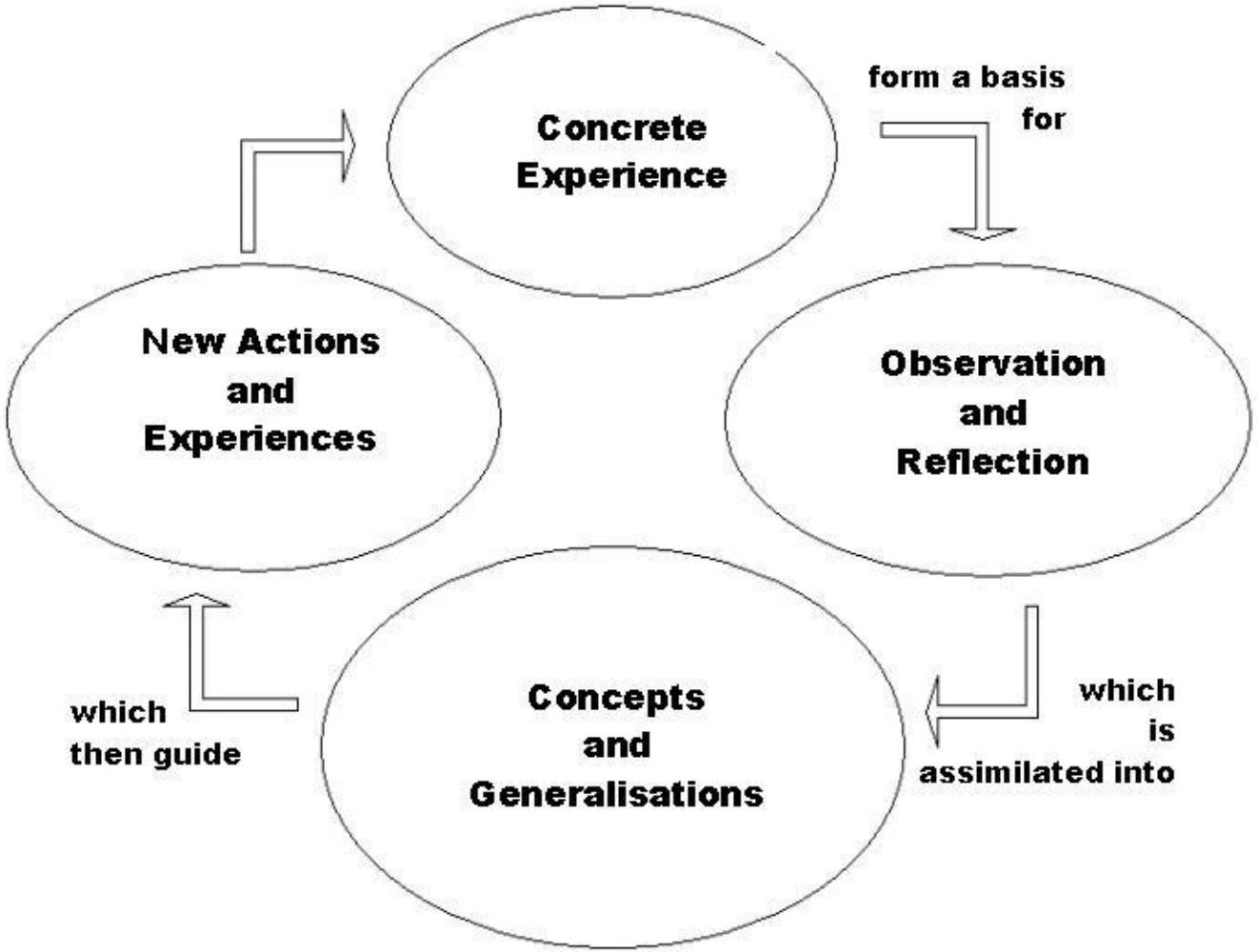
Social Presence
The ability of participants in a community of inquiry to project themselves socially and emotionally as 'real' people (i.e., their full personality), through the medium of communication being used.



Cognitive Presence
The extent to which learners are able to construct and confirm meaning through sustained reflection and discourse in a critical community of inquiry.

Teaching Presence
The design, facilitation and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes.

Experiential Learning (Kolb, 1984)



- Fundamental to whole course
- Underpinned both TPCK and COI frameworks
- Provided both teachers and students - simple, effective purpose and guide for learning

7018GIH – Learning objectives

1. demonstrate an understanding of blended learning design philosophy and pedagogical approaches;
2. demonstrate an understanding of effective implementation and evaluation strategies for blended learning;
3. demonstrate skills in practically applying blended learning approaches to the design of course teaching and learning activities and assessment tasks through the appropriate use of information and communication technologies (ICTs); and
4. engage in critical reflection on blended learning from both teacher and student perspectives.

Course structure

- 3 x Face-to-face workshops in non-teaching weeks
- 4 x Learning modules delivered online
  - » Set readings and activities
  - » 3 x virtual tutorial sessions (Wimba)

» Assessment mostly embedded within L&T activities

- » Small group wiki; Discussion forum;
- » LAMS design and report
- » Reflective journal (blog)

Course structure

Evaluation

- Implemented an evaluation based on the TPCK and COI frameworks, which was in addition to the formal university student evaluation
  - » Online COI evaluation survey (week 10)
  - » Online self-evaluation survey that participants completed before and after the course
    - Rated their own knowledge and skills related to BL
- Participants also reflected (online journal) on their experience and what it meant in terms of their learning

Knowledge and Skills evaluation - Sample items

Please rate how **WELL DEVELOPED** / **CONFIDENT** you believe your knowledge is in relation to:

- The learning and teaching theories that underpin blended learning design.
- The rationale for blended learning in higher education.
- The range of technologies available for use in blended learning designs.
- How students' perceive and experience the use of technology in learning.

…your abilities are in relation to:

- Integrating the use of a wiki/blog/discussion forum/Wimba in your course/practice.
- Designing/managing/assessing online student collaboration and/or activities.
- Using technologies to effectively communicate with students/motivate students/present information to students/engage students
- Evaluating a blended learning course design and experience.
- Effectively managing a technology-rich/blended learning course.

Evaluation results

Participant evaluation of their knowledge and skills in blended learning

Level of knowledge & skills	*Mean*	*SD*	*Confidence in knowledge & skills*	*Mean*	*SD*
Knowledge level: pre-course	2.28	0.99	Knowledge confidence: pre-course	2.41	0.91
Knowledge level: post-course	4.69*	0.75	Knowledge confidence: post-course	4.69*	0.76
Ability with BL tools: pre-course	2.2	0.93	Confidence with BL tools: pre-course	2.68	0.85
Ability with BL tools: post-course	4.33*	0.89	Confidence with BL tools: post-course	4.38*	1.02
Ability to manage BL: pre-course	2.23	0.93	Confidence to manage BL: pre-course	2.61	0.85
Ability to manage BL: post-course	4.42*	0.83	Confidence to manage BL: post-course	4.49*	0.95

* Significant difference between pre- and post-course ratings, with t values ranging between 5.58 and 32.80, $p < .001$.

Notes:

- Related items grouped together for statistical analysis
- At the beginning, majority (87%; 13 of 15) rate their knowledge and skills, and associated confidence, as low or medium
- There was a significant change across the semester, both in knowledge and skills, and in confidence

Evaluation results

Participant evaluation of COI components of the elective course

Teaching Presence	*Mean (SD)*	*Social Presence*	*Mean (SD)*	*Cognitive Presence*	*Mean (SD)*
Design & Organisation	4.16 (0.42)	Affective	3.58 (0.87)	Trigger Events	3.82 (0.70)
Facilitation	4.23 (0.32)	Group Cohesion	3.73 (0.51)	Exploration	3.67 (0.60)
Direct Instruction	4.15 (0.40)	Open Communication	3.64 (0.66)	Integration	4.03 (0.59)
				Resolution	3.94 (.042)

Note. Responses were made on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

Notes:

- Participants rated teaching presence indicators most positively
- Cognitive presence indicators also rated highly
- Social presence rated least positively, and this was reflected in other course feedback

http://communitiesofinquiry.com/methodology

Take-Away

1. The importance of using evidence to inform our teaching practice and the value gained by working from an explicit framework (e.g., TPCK and COI frameworks)
2. A good blend requires a finding a good balance between the Social, Cognitive & Teaching presence
   - Even academics want to be social ☺
   - Even academics feel uncertain, scared, reticent, overwhelmed, insecure…
3. At the heart of blended learning is the “learning” and it reminds us of the students’ need for building strong social connections from the outset of the course

Thank you