A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A
COMMUNITY COLLEGE HYBRID COURSE

By

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ABSTRACT

Educators in many jurisdictions have moved to incorporate the Web as a mode of delivery through the creation of hybrid courses enabled by commercially available course management software. Corporate expectations, the experience of the teacher, and the experience of the students are examined here in the transition of a course from a traditional to a hybrid mode of delivery. It is a qualitative phenomenological study based on observation of the classroom and online sessions supplemented by interviews with the teacher, students, and an instructional leader within the institution. The findings show that corporate expectations were inconsistent with support for implementation. Senior management established little policy on the implementation of the technology. In the absence of policy, the instructional leadership within the institution provided what little direction there was to faculty. The vision held by these instructional leaders emanates from the literature that asserts the superiority of hybrid delivery over other modes. Corporate expectations were not borne out. The teacher replicated the existing design of the traditional course, something that is noted in the literature as a general tendency by teachers in similar situations (Cuban, Kirkpatrick, & Peck, 2001). The experience of the students was the exact reverse of what the instructional leadership intended. Students monitored the progress of the course online and avoided attending class. The hybrid mode of delivery rather than enabling a richer learning experience than that found in the traditional classroom permitted students to use the technology to avoid engagement in the course.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................................ ii  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .................................................................................................................... iii  
LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................................................... vii  
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................. 1  
  A Note about Terminology ................................................................................................ 2  
  Background ........................................................................................................................................ 3  
  Existing Research on the Learning Environment ............................................................... 5  
  Overview of the Literature dealing with Online Learning .................................................. 6  
  Purpose and Rationale ...................................................................................................... 7  
  Summary ....................................................................................................................................... 8  
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................................ 10  
  Scope .............................................................................................................................................. 10  
  The Literature dealing with Online Learning ................................................................... 11  
  The Literature on the Learning Environment ................................................................... 19  
  Summary ....................................................................................................................................... 24  
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY ......................................................................................................... 27  
  Site Selection and Its Description .................................................................................... 27  
  Description and Role of the Researcher .......................................................................... 28  
  Selection and Description of Participants ........................................................................ 31  
    Barb, an Instructional Leader within the College ......................................................... 31  
    Judy, the Teacher ................................................................................................................ 32  
    Brianna and Keri, the Student Participants ..................................................................... 33  
  Data Collection Strategies Employed .............................................................................. 34  
  Data Analysis Techniques ............................................................................................... 35  
  Limitations of the Design and Issues of Validation .......................................................... 37  
CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS I: CORPORATE EXPECTATIONS, COURSE DESIGN AND OUTCOMES .............................................................................................................................. .......... 39  
  Corporate Policy and Expectations ................................................................................. 39  
  Vision of Hybrid learning held by Instructional Leadership at the College ...................... 43  
  The Observed Course Design .......................................................................................... 46  
  Student Reaction ............................................................................................................. 51  
  Conclusion ...................................................................................................................... 52  
CHAPTER V. FINDINGS II: A NARRATIVE ACCOUNT OF THE COURSE FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ........................................................................................................... 54  
  Judy: A Teacher’s Story ................................................................................................... 54
Class Syllabus...................................................................................................................................................... 181

APPENDIX 7...................................................................................................................................................... 185

Week 7: Required Reading............................................................................................................................ 185
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Typical lesson plan for a classroom session</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Typical lesson plan for online activities</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Rate of attendance at the face-to-face sessions</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rate of attendance online</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Peter Drucker, the management guru, forecast the demise of teaching following the advent of online learning. He predicted that Web-based education would permit everyone in the future to become a self-directed learner with no need for the professional teacher (Drucker, 1999). This attitude is only one, and one of the more extreme, of a long line of assumptions about technology and learning that seem to follow every technological innovation; an observation noted by Cuban, Kirkpatrick, and Peck (2001) in their work dealing with the adoption of technology in secondary education. This thesis examines the transition from a traditional course taught solely within the classroom to a hybrid course delivered partly online and partly within the classroom. The course observed was one offered at a community college\(^1\) in Ontario.

The study is a qualitative phenomenological examination based on observation of the classroom and online sessions supplemented by interviews with the teacher and students, and also with an instructional leader from the Learning and Teaching Services Division, the Division responsible for the implementation of hybrid course delivery within the College. In addition to these data sources, I completed a document review involving the text generated by the teacher and students, formal statements of corporate policy, and working documents from the Learning and Teaching Services Division.

\(^1\) Community colleges in Ontario are post-secondary institutions that offer academic upgrading, basic education, and specialized technical, professional, and vocational programs. In some cases, applied degrees and continuing education courses are offered as well.
A Note about Terminology

The literature uses very similar terms with specialized meanings to describe different modes of course delivery that use information technology. A hybrid course, now sometimes seen referred to as a blended course, is one that combines traditional face-to-face classroom sessions, such as lecture, discussion group, and laboratory work with online-based learning. There is a significant part of the course work moved to the online environment and, as a result, students may expect to spend less time in the physical classroom setting. The hybrid course is the focus of this study. Web-based courses differ from hybrid courses only in the fact that students complete all learning activities within the online environment. In such courses, students do not spend any time within a physical classroom setting beyond perhaps an initial introductory session to establish the logistics of the course. Two other terms need to be distinguished from the term “hybrid course.” These are “computer-aided learning” and “computer-mediated learning.” Computer-aided learning is a reference to the incorporation of computing within the learning environment. This may entail drill routines or other applications such as exploration software within the traditional classroom environment. The course is teacher lead and does not imply necessarily the use of Web-delivered resources. Computer-mediated learning uses digitized course material and the student interacts with a computer program that allows him to progress at his own speed and level of competency. Such computer-mediated learning does not involve an instructor. This means of delivery may be Web-based, by CD-ROM, or by specialized software. Often the literature speaks of distance education in relation to information technology in education because distance education was one of the first areas to implement such technology. The characteristic feature of distance learning is that it is off-campus in nature. A choice of delivery such as hybrid, Web-based, or print-based correspondence courses exists for these programs.
Background

The origins of this thesis began with the slogan “Can technology make good teaching better?” that I found posted on a colleague’s office bulletin board. Vaughn, the colleague, is the College manager responsible for the hybrid delivery project. Given the degree of enthusiasm, that Vaughn has shown in the past for technology in general and, his personal championship of BLACKBOARD® itself, the course management system employed by the College for hybrid course delivery, one is inclined to think that the unstated, but implied answer to the question is a resounding “Yes,” at least in Vaughn’s mind. In my mind at that time, the answer to the question was still an open one and less certain. I joined the faculty of the College recently after some twenty years as a manager in the Federal Civil Service.

Teaching was new to me and it was a rather exciting time learning new things and developing a new skill-set. With the introduction of hybrid delivery to the College, I was eager to participate hoping to add yet another dimension to my newly acquired skills as a teacher. After the learning curve required in order to use the technology was completed, I noticed that my initial enthusiasm for something new had waned. Many of the techniques developed for classroom presentations seemed less important in the new environment and I felt that, overall, my teaching had been reduced to writing memos to my students rather like my old role as a Civil Service manager. This ambivalence motivated the choice of research topic for this thesis. My curiosity was peaked to find out about the experience of another teacher in the same situation.

I had more substantive reasons for undertaking such a study. The adoption of course management software by educational institutions at all levels is underway throughout Ontario and other jurisdictions. Cookson (2002) describes the international situation citing over thirteen countries where the implementation is well advanced. This approach to course
delivery is well on its way to becoming a mainstream methodology and not one relegated to
the margins of distance learning. Shale (2002) described the Canadian situation. It is
interesting to note that this trend is not restricted to universities, but is also within the Ontario
Community College system. Online course delivery in Ontario has spread to the secondary
school level with the creation of e-Learning Ontario by the Ministry of Education. For
example, the College currently offers 150 hybrid courses with an enrollment of 5,000
students (Algonquin, 2002, p. 4). The College’s strategic plan calls for further investment in
this mode of delivery.

Hybrid learning, which blends classroom time with online learning, supplemented by
standard face-to-face methodologies is the preferred learning model for full-time
programs … During the next five-year period, we have targeted delivery of 20 percent
of our full-time academic instruction online supported by 24/7 service for

BLACKBOARD® and the network (Algonquin, 2003, para. 7).

The implementation of hybrid courses is not a recent phenomenon. The University of
Wisconsin-Milwaukee has implemented such technology in its Hybrid Course Project since
1991 (Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2001). The University of Central Florida began using such
techniques in the fall of 1996 (Central Florida, 2003). This implementation represents a major
investment and an on-going commitment to maintain the system at a time when government
funding of education is unstable. Cookson (2002) says of the implementation:

Driven by such factors as declining traditional student numbers, reduced government
allocations, proliferation of ICT applications for delivery of education programs,
incursions into their traditional service areas by burgeoning institutional competitors,
and the prospect of significant savings and revenues, campus-based institutions in
many countries are thus becoming dual mode (both face-to-face and distance
education mode) institutions (para. 1).

Cookson’s remarks all deal with concerns driven by issues in educational
management rather than pedagogy. While the reasons for implementing this technology may
be valid, there is legitimate concern about the impact of the technology upon the quality of
education. Indeed, quality of education was a major factor in the 2006 faculty strike in the
Ontario community college system. At least part of this concern by the faculty stemmed from
the adoption of educational technology within the College system and the perception that
management took this step instead of hiring new faculty.

Existing Research on the Learning Environment

The paradigm of the learning environment developed many years ago by Schwab
(1973) provides the essential framework for this study. He identified the main components
functioning within the environment that affect learning. These are the milieu, the discipline,
the teacher, and the student. This basic framework has been developed further by recent
literature that has sought to define effective online teaching. The non-empirical studies of
Reeves and Reeves (1997) and Benbunan-Fich, Hiltz, and Harasim (2005) are examples of
such attempts. Reeves and Reeves look at ten dimensions of teaching (pedagogical
philosophy, learning theory, goal and task orientation, source of motivation, teacher role,
metacognitive support, collaborative learning strategies, cultural sensitivity, and structural
flexibility). In their view, these various dimensions indicate the effectiveness of the online
teaching of the teacher. Benbunan-Fich, Hiltz, and Harasim produced a model of online
interactive learning. The inputs in their model, derived from the paradigm mentioned earlier
by Schwab, include technology (the milieu), the course (the discipline), the instructor, and the
student. Learning processes act on these inputs to generate a set of outputs such as faculty
satisfaction, student learning, and student satisfaction. I used this research literature to inform the interviews conducted with the teacher in this study.

Duffy and Jones (1995) examined factors influencing student satisfaction throughout the semester. The authors found that there were three distinct phases in a typical semester. The first of these occurred in the opening weeks of the term when the community of learners was established. The next phase Duffy and Jones called “the doldrums.” It took place in the interim weeks leading up to the end of term. The achievement of closure characterizes the final phase. The successful teacher dealt with this pattern, or the rhythm of the semester, in different ways. I conducted the interviews once in each of the three phases identified in order to see if the student level of comfort was affected in the ways predicted by Duffy and Jones.

Overview of the Literature dealing with Online Learning

Online learning is an emerging area of research and the literature dealing with hybrid delivery is limited. Contributions from practitioners dominate the existing literature and this has led some commentators to observe that there is a need for more formal research in the field (Kezar, 2001). A general lack of methodological rigour accompanied by enthusiastic advocacy for technological innovation characterizes the practitioners’ literature. See for example the work of Draves (2000). The themes explored within this literature emphasize the student rather than the other aspects of the learning environment. The identification of the attributes of the successful student in an online environment, learning styles and online learning, and modes of communication are some of the topics explored. It would be easy to dismiss this body of research as inconsequential, but to do so would be dangerous or at least inappropriate for it does reveal the concerns and interests of those in the classroom who are using the technology.
The dominance of practitioners’ literature is changing and research into online learning has become more prevalent recently. A good survey of these recent developments is available in a collection of state-of-the-art papers edited by Hiltz and Goldman (2005). What emerges from Hiltz and Goldman is a set of tentative conclusions about hybrid learning, for example, that it affords deeper learning, and a richer learning environment than does traditional teaching in the classroom. These are sweeping claims by Hiltz and Goldman and the reader should be aware that the studies examined by them excluded courses other than those they called “learning networks”, i.e., taught from a standpoint of outcomes based teaching, collaborative learning, and a constructivist approach. Student performance appears to be unaffected by the change in mode of delivery, and there are improvements in communication between student and teacher (Arbaugh & Benbunan-Fich, 2005, pp. 130-131). The themes found in the formal research are divergent from those in the practitioners’ literature and there appears to be a need to reconcile these two bodies of literature.

**Purpose and Rationale**

The purpose of this study is to examine the transition of a traditional course delivered previously in the classroom to a hybrid course delivered both online and with face-to-face teaching. I am a community college teacher and a practitioner, rather than a formal researcher in education. The focus of this study is the pedagogical implications of implementing the hybrid model on the quality of educational experience as perceived by participants. As a practitioner, I want to present a set of conclusions, or lessons that will be helpful in a practical sense to my peers and educational administrators tasked with implementing such technology.

One rationale for this study lies in its timeliness. Institutions throughout many different jurisdictions and at all levels are implementing hybrid courses currently.
Administrative reasons rather than pedagogical ones motivated this implementation. Finally, the study could help to make hybrid courses more effective.

Summary

The introduction, literature review, and methodology chapters form the first part of this thesis. The introduction provides the background to the study, its purpose and rationale, as well as a broad summary of the existing literature on the learning environment and what is know about online learning. A survey of the literature follows that gives in more depth a review of the literature on these topics from the perspective of both the practitioner and professional researcher in education. The chapter on methodology gives a description of how I conducted this study. Site selection and description, the description and role of the researcher, the selection and description of all the participants, strategies used in data collection, data analysis techniques used, and the limitations of the design along with issues of validation are discussed.

The second part of the thesis reports on the research findings, first policy, and then experience. First, I give a comparison between corporate policy and expectations on hybrid learning with the design of the observed course. Corporate expectations were two-fold. There was a formal policy established by the senior management of the college augmented by an unarticulated vision of hybrid learning held by the instructional leadership responsible for implementing the initiative. The student reaction to the course is included in this comparison. I present the course experience as a narrative account of the course from the various perspectives of each of the participants in the study. I based this narrative on the transcripts of the interviews held with the participants, as well as the observations I made of the face-to-face and the online sessions of the course.
The third and final part of the thesis consists of a thematic analysis of the findings followed by a discussion of the significance of the findings in relation to the literature examined. The commonplaces of the learning environment established by the work of Schwab organize the discussion. These are the milieu, the discipline, the teacher, and the student. I compare the themes found in the research with the claims made in the literature. The concluding chapter suggests what lessons might be learnt on the basis of this study from the perspective of the practitioner, as well as at the institutional level when faced with the problem of making the transition from the classroom to a blended environment involving both face-to-face sessions and the Web.
CHAPTER II.

LITERATURE REVIEW

My first encounter with the literature dealing with online learning occurred in the spring of 2001 when I attended a workshop on hybrid course development offered by the Learning and Teaching Services Division of the College. During that presentation, Barb, the presenter, made a number of assertions about the hybrid mode of course delivery. Parenthetically, Barb later participated in this thesis as a participant because of her role within the College as an instructional leader. She claimed that the existing literature showed that hybrid courses produced better learning outcomes than either solely online or classroom courses by themselves, that hybrids enabled an enhanced richer learning environment that fostered deeper learning, and that communication between teacher and student improved in hybrid courses. Students, she claimed, wanted the new mode of delivery because it freed up their time and allowed them to schedule the demands of school around other demands in their personal lives. These were startling assertions and, I remember asking, what were the citations to the literature. Much to my surprise, the response was as startling as the assertions themselves. The presenter referred me to the practitioners’ literature that forms the basis of this review and not to a body of formal research.

Scope

This review begins with a definition of the scope of the literature survey. A description of the literature follows the statement of scope in terms of its principal characteristics. These characteristics include type of research, the intended audience, and the research themes. The review concludes with an assessment of the usefulness of the existing literature to the proposed study.
The scope of this review of the literature is broader than the research topic itself. The focus of this research topic is upon the hybrid delivery model that combines online with traditional face-to-face instruction. The literature on hybrid delivery is very limited and, as a result, I expanded the scope of this review to include any work dealing with the use of the Internet for course delivery. The resulting survey deals with online learning through the Web or Internet. The reader should not confuse this with other related topics in educational technology such as computer-mediated learning, computer-assisted learning, and distance learning. In each of these terms, the educational context is broader than what is being examined here; that is the application of the Internet or Web as a means of program delivery. The assumption is that online learning involves different processes from those found in other domains.

The Literature dealing with Online Learning

Some reference sources exist that provide an overview of the literature in online learning. E-journals and email list archives are a good source of information available on the Web itself. For example, Athabasca University publishes the journal *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*. The Center for Teaching and Learning at Stanford University sponsors an email list named “Tomorrow’s Professor” that brings online an international community of practitioners to share their experiences using this new mode of delivery. These references are not scholarly, but intended for the use of practitioners. There are available, however, state-of-the-art reviews that summarize the more formal research literature. These reviews try to identify trends, as well as potential areas for further investigation. Among these publications are the review of Kezar (2001) on instruction in higher education and another review by Kezar (2002) dealing with teaching and learning in higher education. Meyer (2002) has published a review about the quality of online learning.
Recently, Hiltz and Goldman (2005) have published a set of state-of-the-art review articles that summarize the formal research undertaken in this area.

The picture that emerges from these state-of-the-art reviews is a field of research that divides into two distinct communities. There is very clearly dominance of the contribution made by practitioners. The formal research literature is less substantial, but growing. Meyer (2002) cautions us to be critical readers of the practitioners’ literature as she sees this as often undisguised advocacy rather than true research. Kezar (2001) and Weinstein, Husman, and Dierking (2000) acknowledge that in general there is a need for more formal research in this area. For example, Kezar (2001) in her review of research trends in higher education stated, “There is a paucity of truly original research dedicated to explaining or predicting phenomena related to distance learning” (p. 3). Again, Weinstein et al. (2000) concluded that, “We need to investigate the changing nature of learning in computer and distance learning environments, and the implications for both the roles played by learning strategies and the design of these learning environments” (p. 744).

I draw a couple of important conclusions from this apparent division in the literature between the work of the practitioner and the formal researcher. The purpose and intended audience are different. The intended audience of formal research is other researchers within the academy and the objective of this literature is to develop descriptions of hybrid learning and explanations of how it works. The intended audience of practitioners’ literature, on the other hand, is other practitioners with the purpose of advocacy and practical advice, as pointed out by Meyer (2000). Practitioners’ literature describes the personal experience of the reporter; the formal research literature situates particular experience in a broader context. These differences may account for the publishing format and venue chosen by practitioners. The practitioners’ literature does not conform to the established parameters for formal
research and there is a tendency to publish these results online. Certainly, these are drawbacks from the perspective of the formal researcher, but are perhaps of less significance to practitioners. The choice of the Web as a publisher is consistent with the choice of audience. Web publishing allows everyone an equal footing to contribute to the body of knowledge. Traditional academic publishing has ensured quality through the editorial and peer-review process. This is something that Web publishing has been slow to mimic although there are now available online many high-quality academic journals.

One of the major themes of the literature deals with the identification of those attributes that might predict student success in an online course (Bricout, 2001; Brown, 1998; Kubala, 1998). This line of inquiry addresses the issue of student retention in Web-based courses and the fear of teachers that students will find it easier to ignore the requirements of an online course compared to a more traditional mode of course delivery. A number of factors have been investigated that might help select appropriate students. This literature has examined such factors as learning styles, learning strategies (Rigney, 1978), previous computing experience, problem solving ability, and capacity for self-directed learning. Each of these factors contributes to the success of individual students; however, the consensus appears to be that the student’s degree of self-directedness is the determining factor. The literature on self-directed learning (Cranton, 1992; Knowles, 1975) has shown that individuals are not self-directed in all situations and that indeed this is dependent upon their degree of experience in the area studied. One might conclude then that student success depends upon their previous experience in the subject and are inclined to be self-directed.

The literature on learning styles is vast and includes a substantial literature reviewing the impact of learning styles upon Web-based learning (Baird & Monson, 1992; Black, 1998; Cordell, 1991; Diaz & Cartnel, 1999; Davidson & Savenye, 1992; Gill, 1994; Jones, Jacobs
& Brown, 1997; Takacs, Reed, Wells & Dombrowski, 1999). There is no consensus upon whether or not online learning favours one particular style of learning over any of the others. Diaz and Cartnel (1999) have found such differences in their comparison between students learning in an online and in a traditional setting. The online students appeared to be more independent learners than those observed in the classroom. Baird and Monson (1992), on the other hand, argue that online learning can meet the needs of both dependent and independent learners. Davidson and Savenye (1992) examined the impact of learning styles upon outcomes and found no effect. Gill (1994), an experienced online teacher, feels that underachievers of whatever learning style need more support than other students do. They require more direction and less choice. Takacs, Reed, Wells, and Dombrowski (1999) examine a set of teachers to determine if the teachers’ experience or learning style makes a difference in their adaptation to the online environment. They conclude that the determining factor is not learning style but previous experience. The diversity of opinion and findings in this literature suggests that in the case of online learning there is probably no difference from the traditional classroom. Teachers must try to accommodate all styles regardless of the medium.

Good course design is a consistent theme throughout this literature (Bailey, Ross, & Griffin, 1995; Bailey, 1996; Balacheff & Kaput, 1996; Black, 1998; Brickell, 1993; Brown, 1998; Davey, 1999; Horton, 2000; Issaces, 1990; Mioduser, Nachmias, Lahav & Oren, 2000; Moreno, Mayer, Spires & Lester, 2001; Phillips & Horton, 1998; Shapiro & Levine, 1999). Most of this literature represents advice from actual practitioners on what has worked for them in teaching online. The literature raises such issues as navigation (layout and arrangement of the online material), logical organization and structure, and effective communication. An exception to these tips of advice is the work of Moreno et al. (2001). This
is a formal quantitative research report that examines the role of social agency upon student learning. By social agency, Moreno et al. (2001) are referring to the use of a human or simulated human guide within the course. The study finds a difference in student learning between courses designed without any social agency and those that do have a design based upon a social agent. Furthermore, the form of social agent, human or simulated, seems to have no effect.

The impact of the various modes of communication possible in the online environment is another area investigated within the literature (Dufresne, 1996; Penna-Shaff, Martin, & Gay, 2001; Wang & Newlin, 2001; Wegerif, 1998). It is common to distinguish between synchronous and asynchronous communication because time flexibility is an important variable in online communication. An example of synchronous communication would be chat rooms where the discussion is in real time. In contrast to this style, asynchronous communication involves a lapse of time between question and response. Typical of this type is the posting of written responses to a bulletin board. The literature relates these different modes of communication to such issues as student learning styles, and the social needs of learners. The argument is that both styles of communications appeal to different sorts of students and, therefore, course design must incorporate both possibilities.

The comparison of student outcomes in Web-based and traditional courses is another predominant theme in the literature (Gray, 1999; Lewis, Smith, Massey, McGreal & Innes 1998; Phipps & Merisotis, 1999; Schollie, 2001). Meyer (2002) in her review dismisses these comparisons in the following words, “It [the comparison literature] is the source of the ‘no significant differences’ phenomenon, where possible intervening forces are ignored and the researcher and instructor are the same person, further muddying the results”(p. 3). Her observation is obviously applicable to the work of Gray (1999). This is a study of an
individual course by the instructor himself and the question of self-deception and poor research design is certainly a valid criticism of his work. However, in the case of Lewis et al. (1998) and Schollie (2001) the dismissal by Meyers (2002) is less telling. These are not comparison studies so much as technical reports. In the instance of Lewis (1998), the report was prepared for the Canadian Council of Ministers of Education and, in the case of Schollie (2001), the report was for the Alberta school system. Schollie (2001) in particular provided a more critical evaluation of the situation. The data for the study were gathered through a survey of students, parents, and teachers assessing five areas of achievement. These areas were academic skill, technology proficiency, life-long learning, social development, and student acceptance of online delivery. The performance of students was below that of students taught in the classroom in the areas of academic skill, and social development. However, students taught online were superior in such areas as technology proficiency and life-long learning. The literature in this area appears not yet to have coalesced around an uncontested consensus.

Another theme in the literature is an effort to connect Web-based learning with current trends in curriculum thought (Becker 1998, 1999; Breuleux & Laferrière, 1998; Draves, 2000; Gray, 1999; Khan, 1997; Murphy, Walker & Webb, 2001; Postle & Sturman, 2000; Randall, 1992; Reeves & Reeves, 1997; St. Hill, n.d.). A link exists between Web-based learning and constructivist models of learning, as well as interactive learning. Typical of the practitioners’ literature is the work of Gray (1999) and Draves (2000). This literature makes claims of every sort on very unsubstantial evidence. Gray (1999) examines his own teaching in terms of ten indicators of interactive learning developed by Reeves and Reeves (1997). He concludes, “No fatal errors were made in the conversion to the Web. Students who participated in the online evaluation indicated that they were generally satisfied” (p. 9). The
work of Draves (2000) is not properly a work of research but more a vision statement for the potential of online learning drawn from his own experience. There is some research literature on this topic, as for example, the work of Becker (1998). This work seeks to establish a causal link between online learning and the constructivist model. In a quantitative study of 441 teachers, Becker (1998) examines two questions. The first of these is to determine if the adoption of information technology results in curriculum changes. The second of the questions investigated is to determine if teachers are aware of these changes in the curriculum. The conclusion reached was that there is a link between information technology and a curriculum based upon the constructivist model. This literature seems unconvincing. There is insufficient discussion between a teacher’s intention and actual practice. I think that the literature has established that teachers intend to use information technology in terms of current trends in teaching such as constructivism. However, what the literature does not prove is an agreement between teacher intention and teacher practice. There is also the question of which wave of adoption (G. Roulet, personal communication, May 20, 2008). The first wave of technology adoption usually involves adventurous instructors. These people often employ a more open approach that may suggest constructivism. Often others who in a second wave of adoption use rather closed approaches that are based on the technology innovations of the first group.

The existing practitioners’ literature dealing with online instruction reveals a general convergence of opinion within the profession on the positive value of Web-based instruction. Furthermore, there are clear themes in the literature dealing with such issues as the identification of the attributes of a successful online student, the impact of different learning styles, issues of course design and questions of social communications. In addition, there is considerable work comparing learning outcomes between online and traditional courses.
There are attempts made to illustrate that online learning is consistent with the constructivist model of learning. Unfortunately, there is not a well-founded theoretical framework for practitioners’ research. In general, there is a lack of methodological rigor in this research. To conclude, while the existing literature makes many interesting comments about Web-based learning, these observations are putative comments in nature and not established fact. At most, the existing practitioners’ literature is a reflection of the concerns of the profession.

Hiltz and Goldman (2005) have brought together a set of essays that emanated from a two-day workshop on teaching in asynchronous learning networks organized in 2002 by the New Jersey Institute of Technology. The purpose of the collection is to provide a state-of-the-art review of research on asynchronous learning networks, which excludes practitioners’ literature that the editors dismiss as “unsupported vitriol and hyperbole” (p. vii). The report includes essays on the contextual factors involved in online learning, student behaviour, faculty roles, and virtual learning communities. Another group of papers deals with the theoretical basis for online learning and such topics as effectiveness, how to improve quantitative and qualitative research on asynchronous learning networks. The collection includes critiques of the existing quantitative and qualitative literature. Arbaugh and Hiltz (2005) have criticized the existing quantitative research in this area for its reliance on the analysis of single individual courses, rather than multi-course and even multi-institution studies. The review by Goldman, Crosby, Swan and Shea (2005) of the qualitative studies in this area call for a broadening of research techniques to include a spectrum of tools that they dub quisitive research, which appears to be a blend of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The orientation of the collection upon research and not praxis may be disconcerting for the practitioner, but there are practical lessons for the reader to learn as well. For example, the essay on media mix gives useful ideas on how to increase social and
teaching presence without the needless introduction of sophisticated functionality for its own sake.

*The Literature on the Learning Environment*

Schwab (1973), who established a model based on what he called the four commonplaces of schooling, did the foundational work on the learning environment. These commonplaces – milieu, subject content, teacher, and the learners – provide a useful classification for examining the learning environment. Further research on the model proposed by Schwab has investigated the role of each of these different components in student learning.

Biglan (1973) investigated the impact of the discipline upon the learning environment and established a classification of academic disciplines based upon a set of three dimensions. The dimensions he labelled: (1) pure versus applied, (2) hard versus soft and (3) life versus non-life. These labels refer to the nature of the research conducted, the epistemological basis of the discipline, and whether or not the discipline dealt with life or non-life subject matter. Biglan’s classification scheme helps explain apparent differences in teaching methods and student learning between the various disciplines. In terms of this thesis, I assess the impact of the subject matter taught as a possible cause influencing the teacher’s design of the hybrid course.

The teacher is another of Schwab’s commonplaces that influences the learning environment. In this regard, the work of Shulman (1987) established the significance of a teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge. The basis of his concept is on the notion that a teacher brings to the classroom knowledge of the subject matter, as well as knowledge of teaching. Thus, the teaching methods employed are a result of the teacher’s assessment of the situation in terms of the developmental progress of the students and his or her understanding
of the demands of a given subject. The classroom studies on teaching behaviours such as those done by Murray and Renaud (1995) alters to some degree this point of view. Their work showed that differences in the subject context did not explain effective teaching. They found a consistency across disciplinary boundaries among students about what constituted an effective teacher. These attributes were the same regardless of the discipline. Students appeared to value teaching behaviours that stressed interaction and rapport, both qualities that are independent of the subject. Again, there is the implication that the role assumed by the teacher can influence student learning in the context of a hybrid course.

There have been attempts to define effective online teaching. Reeves and Reeves (1997) identified ten dimensions of good teaching. Reeves and Reeves express each dimension as a dichotomy of professional practice. However, nothing in the list of dimensions is unique to the online environment. At most, the list represents current thought on what constitutes best teaching practices. The work of Benbunan-Fich, Hiltz and Harasim (2005) tries to define effective online teaching. They propose a model for online learning that involves such inputs as technology, course, teacher and student. Learning processes act on these inputs to generate a set of outputs such as satisfaction and learning. This is a mechanistic analysis that seems too superficial to explain adequately something as complex as human learning. The model by Benbunan-Fich, Hiltz and Harasim leaves aside the psychological aspects of learning that makes the process so difficult to explain.

The emphasis in current research on the learning environment appears to have turned away from the issues of teacher and discipline to the investigation of how the student learns. One major theme in this literature has been the voluminous work done on the topic of learning style. The term learning style means the cognitive, affective, and physiological manner in which an individual learns. The research has its origins in the Jungian theory of
personality. The research seeks to identify the various elements involved, to categorize them into discrete styles or approaches, and to measure these styles using specific psychometric instruments. These studies use various well-known tests as Myers-Briggs and Kolb among others (Armstrong, 1994). The implications of this research are significant to the issue of effective online learning. It is possible that one specific learning style can be identified that is more amenable to hybrid learning and, therefore, contributes to its overall effectiveness.

An outgrowth of the interest in learning styles is the issue of different learning strategies employed by students. Such differences in learning strategies can be accommodated in course design. Researchers such as Donald (1997), and Entwistle and Tait (1995) have looked at this issue. Their work determined that students appear to employ different strategies depending upon their motivation. For example, a student without true commitment may cram for a test in order to obtain a credential, but may in fact retain little if anything of what he or she learnt over time. This research suggests that students employ three basic strategies: (1) in depth, (2) superficial and (3) strategic learning. These strategies may be typified as the difference between students who set out to master the content of a course in-depth without regard to the evaluation process, those that skim the surface of the content by superficial memorization of basic facts, and those that chose to put to memory only course content that is considered important in terms of its being likely examination material. It is important to determine if hybrid teaching encourages students to employ one strategy over another, and if so, whether or not this is a contributing factor to the effectiveness of the course and has any impact on student success.

Another of Schwab’s commonplaces of learning deals with the impact of the milieu upon the learning environment. The milieu can refer to the concrete place in which the learning occurs, but it can refer more metaphorically to the tone of the general environment.
Lave and Wenger (1991) explore the notion of milieu in this more prosaic meaning. They refer to the social context of learning as an example of situated learning. From their perspective, learning is not a matter of propositional knowledge or a question of cognitive processes and affective changes. The learner joins a community of practitioners and acquires a mastery of new knowledge that permits him to move toward full participation within a professional community. The factors important in how to facilitate this transition from apprentice to professional, they feel, are social in nature. In terms of the more concrete notions of place, a number of studies examine the impact of information technology upon learners. The technical reports by Bracewell and Laferrière (1996) and Lewis, Smith, Massey, McGreal and Innes (1998) examine the implementation of online learning within Canada at the elementary and secondary school level. Their evaluations confirm the positive impact of information technology upon student learning and their intellectual development. These studies also implied that the utilization of information technology occurred with an apparent shift away from teaching attitudes based upon traditional transfer of information toward a more constructionist view of the learning process. The literature does not investigate if this shift is the result of the use of technology itself, i.e., whether it is an inherent trait of information technology, or if teachers with a constructivist perspective were more likely to use information technology.

Comfort level is an emotional reaction of students to a given learning environment that may influence the effectiveness of the type of delivery. There is some educational literature that explores this aspect of learning. The work of Duffy and Jones (1995) typifies this trend. Their contribution was to examine student reactions throughout a semester. This comparison leads to the observation that there were three distinct phases in a typical semester. The first of these phases was the opening weeks where the community of learners is
established. The typical student reaction in this phase is one of anticipation and intellectual excitement. Duffy and Jones dub the interim weeks following this phase the “doldrums”. Students during this phase tend to become anxious and less confident that they can meet the course requirements. Finally, the achievement of closure characterizes the last weeks of the semester. This final phase provides a sense of satisfaction among students. This pattern describes, of course, a successful semester where the course has progressed as planned under the direction of an experienced teacher. Duffy and Jones do not imply that this pattern is inevitable and indeed the focus of their work is to show what actions the teacher must take to support students in each of these phases. The typical rhythm of the semester identified by Duffy and Jones might help indicate the comfort level of students following a hybrid course.

Mann et al. (1970) examines the emotional context of learning from the perspective of the teacher-student relation. In this observational study, the researchers sought to classify the emotional reactions between student and teacher in terms of a set of five emotional states. The first of these states was hostility typified by such actions as moving against, resisting, withdrawing, and guilt-inducing behaviour. The next was affection characterized as behaviour that made reparations, identification, acceptance, and moving toward the other person. Anxiety was the third of these states identified as behaviour that expressed or denied anxiety. Self-esteem and depression were the fourth and fifth of these states. The researchers found no typical behaviours as indicative of these last two emotional reactions. The effective teacher was someone able to manage interpersonal relationships while still meeting educational objectives. In the words of Mann et al. (1970):

The computer-aided learning is a reference to the incorporation of computing within the learning environment. This may entail drill routines or other applications such as exploration software within the traditional classroom environment. The course is
teacher lead and does not imply necessarily the use of Web-delivered resources. Computer-mediated learning uses digitized course material and the student interacts with a computer program that allows him to progress at his own speed and level of competency. Such computer-mediated learning does not involve an instructor. This means of delivery may be Web-based, by CD-ROM, or specialized software. The challenge for each individual teacher lies in adapting his special needs and skills to the particular content goals and the particular students and setting. (p. 333)

Here again is another dimension, the interpersonal relation between student and teacher, which needs exploration when investigating the effectiveness of online learning and teaching.

**Summary**

In the workshop from the Learning and Teaching Services Division that first introduced hybrid learning to the College’s faculty, Barb asserted that hybrid courses produce better learning outcomes than do either solely online or classroom courses. Such hybrids enable an enhanced richer learning environment that foster deeper learning, and improved communication between teacher and student. She claimed that students want the new mode of delivery because it frees up their time and allows them to schedule the demands of school around other demands in their personal lives. I could not find the basis for these claims in the practitioners’ literature. What the assertions seem to represent is a set of conclusions drawn from this literature by the presenter. These assertions are even less certain given that those who have reviewed the practitioners’ literature, such as Kezar (2001, 2002), as well as Hiltz and Goldman (2005), dismiss it as a body of research based on poor methodology and lack of rigour.

Up to this point, practitioners’ literature dominates research on online learning. However, this apparent dominance over more formal research is on the wane. Even so, given
this surge of apparent interest in researching online learning, the question of its effectiveness appears novel still. Arbaugh and Hiltz (2005) have called specifically for more research on the effectiveness of online learning:

There is much more that can be done … These should include qualitative data collection methods in order to gain greater depth of understanding, such as direct observation (electronic ethnography), content analysis of actual interaction patterns, and interviews (p. 97).

The literature on the learning environment provides guidance for a study as called for by Arbaugh and Hiltz (2005). This literature has identified four factors that may influence the effectiveness of a hybrid course. These factors are the learners, the teacher, the subject, and the milieu. Attempts to define effective online teaching help to augment this understanding of the learning environment. In addition to these factors, the work on the emotional context of learning provides some additional potential influences. These are the emotional dynamic of the semester itself and interpersonal relationships among the individuals within the environment. While the existing literature has identified these potential influences, there does not appear to have been any systematic study of these factors within the hybrid online environment.

Research Questions

The research reported in this thesis reports on an actual case. As such, it departs from the perspective enunciated at the opening of this literature review by Barb. Barb’s view of hybrid learning is indicative of the view of the instructional leadership of the College and her view is based upon the assertions about the superiority of hybrid learning taken from the literature. The research presented here does not investigate the validity of these claims. Similarly, the perspective found in the practitioners’ literature and the formal research differs
from the one taken in this thesis. The perspective of the literature focuses upon the nature of	online learning in an attempt to uncover what it is and what it is not. The research undertaken
by this thesis moves beyond these two perspectives to consider the problem of how to make
the transition from one mode of delivery to another, from courses delivered face-to-face in the
classroom to courses delivered in both the classroom, as well as the online environments.

This thesis examines one specific course and its transition from the classroom to a
hybrid or blended mode of delivery. This exploration of the transition from one mode of
delivery to another involves four secondary investigations: (1) to determine the expectations
of the institution faced by the teacher, (2) to describe how well the teacher’s revision of the
course met those expectations, (3) to discover the experience of the students with the actual
course delivered, and (4) to compare how the actual experience of the teacher and students in
this case met with the intentions expressed by corporate policy and by the claims made in the
literature.
CHAPTER III.

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative phenomenological study of the transition of a traditional course in English to a hybrid course where instruction is a mix of online and in-the-classroom sessions. The methodology used in this study is discussed under the following subheadings: (a) the site selection and its description, (b) the role and description of the researcher, (c) the selection and description of the participants, (d) data collection strategies employed, (f) the data analysis techniques used, and (g) the limitations of the design and issues of validation.

Site Selection and Its Description

The study examined a hybrid course offered by the College, which is a component institution of the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology system. The College is a post-secondary institution serving adult learners offers certificates, diplomas, and applied degrees in a variety of vocational areas. There are over 150 hybrid courses now offered by the College. The specific course followed for this study I chose based on the teacher’s experience using the technology and her experience as a teacher. She was an experienced teacher in mid-career with some seventeen years of experience in teaching. Furthermore, she was experienced in using the technology having been involved in the hybrid initiative since 2000. I sought this background in the study in order to lessen the impact of inexperience on the course design. I observed the course during the winter term of 2005 from its beginning in January until the completion of term in April. This was the second iteration of the course taught by this teacher using the hybrid model of delivery. The course had been offered previously only within the classroom. For hybrid courses of the weight of the course studied, the College specified 16 hours of instruction online with 32 hours of instruction in traditional face-to-face sessions in a classroom. The other deciding factor in choosing this course over
another for observation was the subject matter. The topic of the observed course was English language skills for the workplace. This topic was familiar to the researcher and, therefore, the content was not a distraction to him when observing the progress of the course throughout the term. This distraction might have occurred if the material had been in a subject that was very unfamiliar.

The teacher described the course in two documents distributed at the beginning of term to the enrolled students. These documents are the course outline developed by the individual educator, approved by the academic manager, and a course syllabus developed by the teacher that is not subject to an approval process. The outline (See appendix 6) provides a description of the course, the learning outcomes and the evaluation criteria used to assess student performance. The syllabus (See appendix 7) contains a weekly schedule of activities and assignments.

**Description and Role of the Researcher**

The researcher in qualitative studies has an impact on the credibility of the inquiry because the researcher is the instrument or at least the agent of research (Patton, 2002, p. 566). In an effort to address this credibility issue, I provide the following information: my experience, training, and perspective, how I gained access to the study site, what prior knowledge I brought to the study site, and the topic studied, and what personal connections, if any, pre-existed between me and the participants, me and the site, as well as me and the topic. These categories of information are adapted from Patton (pp. 566-570).

I am a fifty-four year old, white Anglo-Saxon male of protestant extraction. I completed undergraduate and graduate studies in mediaeval history. Subsequently, I qualified as a professional librarian. I became a science librarian upon leaving university when I joined the federal civil service. While employed in the federal civil service, I occupied a number of
different professional and administrative positions dealing with the management of scientific information. I resigned from the civil service after twenty years of service and joined the faculty of a community college of applied arts and sciences. I have been a classroom teacher of adults for the last eight years and have become recently program coordinator for the Library and Information Technician Program.

By inclination, I am a traditional teacher. Miller and Seller (1991) examined the context of the traditional viewpoint (pp. 17-61). Philosophically the stance has its origins in the tradition of English empiricism and analytical philosophy. Its view of human nature is consistent with behavioral psychology. On the political spectrum, the viewpoint is associated closely with that strand of conservatism that Miller and Seller label as laissez-faire conservatism with its emphasis on the economic and political freedom of the individual. This is a perspective centered upon consideration of three basic tenets. These tenets are the subject/discipline, competency-based education, and cultural transmission. In practice, this perspective means that the primary focus of the teacher is on how to apply his subject knowledge in order to organize and structure a lesson in the best possible manner for the student to understand the material. The objective of the teacher is the successful mastery of the subject material by the student. This focus upon the content of the curriculum implies a certain attitude toward the nature of knowledge itself. Knowledge is objective and is not involved in value judgments. This view does not see knowledge in terms of its political context and does believe that a core of the curriculum exists that will convey objectively the cultural values of the general community that is independent of politicized discussion.

I am a member of the faculty of the College. I chose a hybrid course offered by the College as the site of this study for ease of access and because of familiarity with the corporate context as the College was my place of employment. I sought and obtained formal
permission to conduct the study through the College Research Ethics Board, which issued a
certificate of ethical approval based on the research proposal submitted to the committee.

The Learning and Teaching Services Division of the College introduced the use of an
online course management system in 2000. I became involved in this initiative as soon as
possible. My previous work experience dealt with the integration of technology with
information services and upon joining the College, I used a website to support my classroom
teaching. The new technology represented a natural progression given my prior experience. I
have developed two online courses, four hybrid courses, and used the course management
software to support two other courses delivered traditionally in the classroom.

My personal connection to the participants, research site, and the topic is limited. The
teacher participant is a colleague with whom I have had only a nodding acquaintanceship
prior to the beginning of the study. The student participants were unknown to me because
they were in a program unrelated to my assigned teaching duties. There was more
acquaintance with Barb, one of the instructional leaders within the College’s community. She
is a member of the Learning and Teaching Services Division who is responsible for
organizing two three-week orientation sessions for new teachers called ‘Focus on Learning’
in which I participated. In addition, she is responsible for on-going professional development
and has been an instructor in various courses offered by the Division on how to use the
software effectively. The research site, as mentioned previously, is my place of employment.
My connection to the topic of study comes from my teaching experience and not from any
prior knowledge of the subject.

The role of the researcher that I assumed during this study was that of interviewer and
observer. I received permission from all students to observe the delivery of the course. This
meant that I was an instructor registered in the online course with all the rights to view the
entire course and archived information created by the students and teacher. In addition, I observed each of the classroom sessions held weekly throughout term. I conducted interviews with the teacher and student participants. Initially, two students had agreed to participate, but one withdrew before the completion of the study. The incomplete information collected from that student remained in the study. I gave the student the opportunity to suppress the information, but she declined to do so. I did not share student identities and comments with the teacher participant. I did not share with any third party, with the exception of Barb, the instructional leader any of the collected information with the real course and participant labels attached.

Selection and Description of Participants

Barb, an Instructional Leader within the College

The choice of Barb was a decision made by me with two considerations in mind. A degree of rapport needed to exist prior to the beginning of the study to ensure that a comfort level existed between the two of us that would enable significant communication. Barb and I met in 1995 when I was a consultant at the College. This initial introduction further developed when I left the federal civil service and joined the teaching faculty of the College in 1999. Barb organized an introductory course for new hires that was devoted to adult learning. Because of this course, I became interested in adult education as a field of study and I applied to the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University as a part time student. The other consideration was the knowledge base of the chosen individual. The person chosen would need to be familiar with the technology, hybrid learning, and how the College had implemented these initiatives. The focus of Barb’s doctoral work was on qualitative studies with an emphasis on research design and analysis. Barb has been involved directly with the implementation of the hybrid delivery project at the College because of her position within
the Learning and Teaching Services Division. This Division is responsible for the administration and development of the course management software and the hybrid delivery project.

Barb is an exceptional professional teacher in late career with some forty years of diverse experience. Her initial academic preparation was in nursing and this beginning she augmented by an undergraduate degree in nursing education and administration. She developed a strong interest in teaching and completed the degree of Master of Education with a concentration in curriculum and psycho-pedagogy. Doctoral studies followed in education where all but the dissertation was completed. She has taught at nursing schools, community colleges, and universities. The Laurent Isabelle Award recognized her teaching skill within the College community for teaching excellence. This award is the highest recognition possible at the College. Currently, Barb is a member of the Learning and Teaching Services Division and provides college-wide support for curriculum development and evaluation, as well as helping faculty members implement curriculum using a variety of delivery modes such as BLACKBOARD®.

Judy, the Teacher

I selected the teacher participant with the assistance of the Learning and Teaching Services Division. I chose the individual based on: (a) a displayed interest in participating in the study, (b) formal recognition of teaching excellence, and (c) experience in teaching, as well as using the technology. I chose these criteria in order to discount, as much as possible, any effect on the data collected caused through inexperience. For copies of the information letter and consent form given to the teacher participant see Appendix 2.

The teacher participant is an accomplished professional in mid-career with some seventeen years of experience. Her academic preparation is well rounded. Her education
includes graduate work in the humanities, a teaching degree, and a certificate in adult education. She received formal recognition of her teaching skill in 1994 when the Students’ Association awarded her a certificate of appreciation. She has three years of experience working with hybrid courses. In addition to her formal duties as a member of the faculty, she has participated in the broader life of the college community through involvement with such professional development initiatives as a competency-based teacher-education program. This involvement extended beyond the college community itself to include volunteer work in a provincial association for language and literacy. In summary, the teacher participant is an experienced, well-educated, perceptive professional.

Brianna and Keri, the Student Participants

Two student participants, Brianna and Keri, joined the study based on self-selection. I held an information session in the first class of term in which an information letter was distributed and I discussed the study. See Appendix 3 for the text of the letter distributed. Students were encouraged to express any concerns that they might have had with my presence as an observer and I gave contact information to make these concerns known after the session. I received no comments. One week later in the next class, I invited students again to participate and a consent form was distributed. See Appendix 4 for the text of the consent form. Of the two student participants, only one, Brianna, remained with the study until its completion. Keri withdrew early from the study. I told Keri of her right to remove any data collected relating to her, but I received no response and the information remained as a result in the study.

Attached to the response form was a brief set of questions that permitted the students to self-report on their level of experience with information technology and computer-assisted learning. I asked these questions in order to determine if the reaction to the hybrid course by
the students resulted from their degree of experience. The two participants responded to the
questions similarly with only minor variations. For a text of the response form distributed
please, see Appendix 4. I asked the students about their familiarity with the Web and both
responded that they were experts. Both responded that they had previous experience at the
College with online learning. Brianna responded that she had a lot of experience with the
hybrid format and that she was an expert with the course management software. Keri’s
responses were somewhat different. She indicated some experience with hybrid courses and
felt that she was a novice in using the technology. Given these responses, the conclusion
reached was that inexperience with information technology would not be a factor in the
students’ reaction to the hybrid course. Indeed, concerns about the software were never raised
by any student in either the face-to-face sessions or online.

Data Collection Strategies Employed

The data collection strategies used in this study were (a) direct observation, (b)
interviews, and (c) document review. Direct observation for the sixteen-week period
representing the winter term of 2005 was undertaken for each of the online and classroom
sessions of the course. I held semi-structured interviews with the teacher and the student
participants in the study. I had four such interviews with the teacher. The first of these
occurred before the beginning of the course, the next immediately after the first week of
classes, then again at mid-term, and finally at the end of the semester. I held student
interviews at the beginning of term, at mid-term, and at the end of term. Similarly, I held
interviews with Barb, the instructional leader, at the beginning of the term, at mid-term, and
at the end of term. Document review involved the examination of written feedback from the
teacher and the College instructional leader. There was also a review of policy and working
documents concerning hybrid learning from the administration of the College and the Learning and Teaching Services Division.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis techniques described in the research proposal involved two distinct stages. These stages were (a) the identification of themes and patterns in the evidence collected, and (b) the reconstruction of the course using narrative techniques. I carried out these procedures as proposed with some modification as noted in the following discussion.

The initial analysis of the data I completed manually to establish the themes and patterns present. The volume of information was such that computer-assisted manipulation of the data using an analytical software package was not necessary. The steps taken to identify the themes and patterns were consistent with those described in McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 468-472). Each data set I read several times to determine a sense of the whole text. I recorded the topics that emanated from these repeated readings. Next, I noted the textual context of the topics in each of the data sets. I made a comparison between the different data sets to determine if similar topics occurred in all the sets. This comparison established a group of themes evident throughout the data. Finally, I examined the emerging themes to create a system that organized the related themes and sub-themes according to distinct patterns.

The next stage in the analysis of the data was the writing of a series of composite narratives based on the collected evidence. These narratives tell the story of the examined hybrid course as it unfolded throughout the semester from the perspective of the different participants. There is a story for each of the participants involved in the study, including Judy, the teacher; Brianna and Keri, the 2 student participants; and myself as the researcher. The purpose of these narratives is to communicate to the reader a sense of the collected evidence.
as a whole in context rather than to present fragments of literal transcriptions of interviews and field notes, together with interpretative commentary. The use of narrative in qualitative studies as a means to report the collected data is noted in Patton (2002, p. 195-198). The many variations, which these narratives can take, are discussed in McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 487-493). The narrative provided here was not only an attempt to report the collected data, but also to help interpret those data. The reader can also view story telling as a form of analysis. Richardson (2001, p. 35) speaks of writing as a method of discovery while Clandinin and Connelly (1991, p. 274) use the term narrative inquiry for much the same concept.

There are advantages and some drawbacks to the data analysis techniques employed in this study. The most obvious of these advantages is the use of the narrative to report the data in its context. The narrative provides the reader with the opportunity to experience an impression of the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the participants in the study. Inherent in this choice of reporting method is a serious drawback. The quality of the narrative is dependent upon the writing skills of the researcher. In this instance, the results were limited because of my lack of experience in creative writing. Before commencing with the composition of the narratives presented here I followed a personal development course in creative writing offered through one of the local school boards. This was an attempt to overcome the lack of experience in writing in this manner with mixed results. Nevertheless, writing fiction and narrative inquiry as attempted here do differ in two important ways. Fiction imposes plot structure to provide suspense and drama for the reader and, even historical fiction deliberately alters some facts for aesthetic purpose. It is not possible to do so in these circumstances where narrative is used to report the experienced reality. I expect the reader to understand the narrative genre.
Limitations of the Design and Issues of Credibility and Transferability

The parameters of this thesis are a limiting feature of the design. This thesis is a single case study in a particular setting, an Ontario community college. The findings may not extend beyond this one particular course or, extend further than the community college involved in the study. This is a qualitative research study and there is a potential for the skewing of the interpretation of the data by the researcher. The design of the study has addressed this issue through the collection of data from different sources in an attempt to capture different perspectives. There is a further limitation imposed by the data collected. The data collected from the teacher and the instructional leader is particularly rich and deep when compared to the information obtained from the students. This imbalance raises the possibility that the perspective of the student may be under-represented. I addressed these limitations as much as possible by soliciting feedback from all participants on the data collected. I received such feedback from the teacher and the instructional leader, but not from the student participants.

The issue of validity is problematic for qualitative studies because such studies deal with results not capable of generalization unlike those obtained from quantitative studies. The reader determines the value of a quantitative study by the test of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity. These tests do not really exist for the assessment of a qualitative study. The determination of such a study’s value is possible through the application of logical rules of confirmation that parallel rather than duplicate the tests available for quantitative studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles, & Huberman, 1994; Shulman, 1986). In this situation, instead of testing the internal validity of results, the reader should seek to establish credibility. By credibility, I mean the accuracy by which the report identifies and describes the subject material. Instead of testing the external validity, the reader should seek to establish the
transferability of the results. By transferability, I mean the general applicability of the report based on the description of the study and its parameters. Instead of establishing the reliability of the study, the reader needs to know the dependability of the study in question. By dependability, I mean the researcher’s ability to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for examination. Instead of objectivity, the reader should seek confirmability of the findings reported. By confirmability, I mean that the data reported substantiates the general findings of the study.
CHAPTER IV.

FINDINGS I: CORPORATE EXPECTATIONS,
COURSE DESIGN AND OUTCOMES

An examination of relationships among the corporate expectations, the teacher’s design of the observed hybrid course, and the students’ learning experience of it, is the purpose of this chapter. The implementation of course management software and the introduction of hybrid courses into the curriculum was an initiative of the senior management of the College. I describe the background for this decision first. The intent of this description is to establish the corporate expectations of what constitutes good hybrid course design. The implementation of the technology augmented and enhanced the policy on hybrids established by the senior management of the College. The implementation of this initiative was the responsibility of the Learning and Teaching Services Division. The Division championed the initiative and first brought the notion of online learning to the attention of the College management. This group provided instructional leadership within the College and developed a vision of hybrid teaching and learning that extended beyond the formal policy established by senior management. I describe this institutional vision, the teacher’s vision of a hybrid course, and the course in action. A description of the observed course based on field notes taken during the face-to-face sessions follows, as well as a description of the online portion of the class. Finally, I outline the student reaction to the course in terms of their participation.

Corporate Policy and Expectations

The Learning and Teaching Services Division during 1999 and 2000 undertook experimentation with course management software prior to the general implementation of the software throughout the College. At this time, evaluation copies of WebCT and BLACKBOARD® were tested and the College took the decision to acquire BLACKBOARD®. The College began a limited implementation of the software in 2001 and 2002. Learning and
Teaching Services Division sought volunteers within the faculty to convert existing courses to hybrids. The College offered an incentive to participating faculty that included release time from some normally assigned teaching duties, as well as priority access to laptop computers.

A senior management decision followed this limited and voluntary implementation in 2003 to make hybrid course delivery the preferred model for future curriculum development throughout the College. Management set a target to convert over a five-year period 20% of the existing curriculum in each program to hybrid courses (Algonquin, 2003).

Hybrid learning, which blends classroom time with online learning, supplemented by standard face-to-face methodologies is the preferred learning model for full-time programs … During the next five-year period, we have targeted delivery of 20 percent of our full-time academic instruction online supported by 24/7 service for BLACKBOARD® and the network (par. 7).

The minutes of the Board of Governors and the Academic Strategic Plan for the year 2003 (Algonquin, 2003a, 2003b) show clearly the context for this decision. The graduation of the double cohort in Ontario (two graduating classes due to a change in the Ontario secondary school system) occurred in this year and placed great pressure on the College’s ability to find classroom space. The closure of a satellite campus and the consolidation of the College at one location, the central campus exacerbated this accommodation problem. This context was confirmed in feedback from Barb, the participant who was one of the instructional leaders involved in implementing hybrid learning at the College. She was concerned, however, to place the decision by management in a slightly broader context than just the issue surrounding the lack of space. The managers also considered in their decision the need for computer and information literacy by graduates. This was a concern expressed by employers. In addition, they considered that students might welcome the flexibility of online learning
given the demands placed upon them by part time work. Finally, one other consideration by management was the fact that the Learning and Teaching Services Division asserted that the literature suggested the success rates for hybrid courses were better or equal to those achieved in face-to-face ones. The broader context suggested by Barb, while true, does not detract from the core basis upon which the management acted. The introduction of hybrid learning and the associated technology into the College was to solve an administrative problem, lack of space, rather than by any consideration of improving the students’ educational experience. Put in another way, none of the other considerations identified by Barb was of sufficient gravity, to justify the major investment in online learning if there had not been insufficient classroom space to meet the additional increase in student enrollment.

No mention is made of modes of course delivery in the College directives. The directives are the official expression of corporate policy that regulates all aspects of College life (Algonquin, 2007). The directives are divided into seven basic groups: a general category, finance, property, staff/personnel, academic matters, educational resources, and research. The directives dealing with academic matters are a collection of 45 individual policy statements on issues such as (1) academic procedures such as evaluation and the review of grades, (2) administrative issues such as the transfer of credits and the suspension of programs, and (3) student conduct, such as plagiarism. The policy framework of the College contains only one reference to hybrid courses. Directive E-33, course outlines, contains the minimum information that a teacher is to include on the Web site for each course taught. The directive requires that the teacher post the outline of the course and the schedule under the course information tab and that the teacher must use a welcome announcement at the start of the course. Barb acknowledges this lack of official policy within the College community, but she goes on to point out that the College no longer considers hybrid delivery the preferred model.
It is only one of a number of modes of delivery open for the teacher to consider when designing a course. Since the pronouncement in the strategic plan for 2003, she points out that four possible delivery models exist. These are: (1) face-to-face, (2) online, (3) hybrid, and (4) experiential (which includes such elements as fieldwork and clinical practice). Barb clarified that the introduction of online learning in the College is an emerging activity and that as a result changes occur throughout the implementation. At the same time, it is interesting to note that the authorization of these four modes of delivery is unclear. The modes identified by Barb are not by her own admission stated in policy and I am left to ponder from where these have originated.

While there does not appear to be an official policy statement from the College that defines the term hybrid course, there is nevertheless, a commonly understood definition of what is a hybrid course that operates within the College community. This understanding finds expression in the faculty handbook for 2006 (Algonquin College, 2006). In this document, the definition of a hybrid course is a course that involves one hour of instruction online and two hours of instruction within the classroom per week of the term. The policy gives no direction concerning what constitutes one hour of instruction online. Beyond the common understanding that focuses only on the mode of delivery, there does not appear to be a policy in place that defines what constitutes a hybrid course. Once again, Barb’s comments attempt to clarify this definition. She agrees that hybrid learning is a blend of online and in-class learning techniques, but disputes that there is a common understanding that hybrid courses involve a standardized particular amount of time spent in each environment. She points out that the curriculum review committee monitors programs to ensure a mix of classroom, online, and experiential learning are available to students, but that the committee does not judge the way a particular program uses these hours for teaching and learning. In practical
terms, however, there is such a standardized amount of time assigned to hybrid courses. For example, in the case of a hybrid course, the Registrar’s Office schedules classrooms for two-hour classes on the timetables of students. However, program managers assign teachers three hours of contact time on their workload assignments for the same courses.

*Vision of Hybrid learning held by Instructional Leadership at the College*

Managing the implementation of hybrid courses and the corresponding electronic technology associated with this change is the task of the Learning and Teaching Services Division. This implementation occurs through a policy of fostering change through professional development and support rather than declarative statements of required performance. How a specific hybrid course is developed is the responsibility of the individual teacher and program involved. This responsibility was made clear in a presentation by the Division to the senior management of the College where it was stated that, “The College expects that faculty will exercise their professional judgment in their choice of learning tools and strategies to achieve the expected student outcomes” (Bloor, 2005, p. 2). Support provided to faculty, besides the necessary technological infrastructure, includes professional development workshops and seminars. These workshops and seminars focused originally on introducing teachers to the functionality of the new technology. Over time, the Division introduced a second stream of workshops that focused upon course design and pedagogical considerations. In particular, a series called “Tools 4 Teaching” was developed. “Tools 4 Teaching” has a curriculum focus rather than a technological one and emphasizes how in a hybrid or blended course appropriate learning activities can be designed, how to link assessment to learning outcomes, and how the design of the course may support individualized learning for the student. In addition, the College created the Online Learning Centre. The Centre provides one-on-one assistance to faculty in course development.
The Learning and Teaching Services Division has issued several working-level documents relating to hybrid course development. Among these documents are two checklists (Learning and Teaching Services Division, 2005, 2007). The checklists are development aids intended to help experienced teachers make the transition from traditional to hybrid courses. The lists identify a set of pedagogical issues that include (i) instructional design, (ii) communication and collaboration, (iii) management of the hybrid course, (iv) evaluation of the hybrid course, and (v) information and instructional technology skills. Under each of these issues, the checklists elaborate on how the course management software supports or enables the desired feature. In this way, the checklists represent a set of soft expectations that the College does not explicitly express but only infers. The checklists conclude with a cross-reference of each task to the professional competencies set out in the “Professor of the 21st century” document (Algonquin College, 2004). The basis of these professional competencies is on a pedagogical view founded in experiential and outcomes based learning. This document established by the College’s Academic Council identifies key professional competencies for faculty. This profile is the basis for the professional development of existing faculty and is a guide used in the hiring of new faculty.

Consistent with the implementation strategy adopted by the Learning and Teaching Services Division, there are no guidelines developed for the assessment of hybrid courses. This is because the responsibility of the Division is to support the faculty and not monitor performance, which lies in the purview of the respective academic managers in each program. However, the Division is responsible for the general education electives offered throughout the College. These courses are solely online using the course management software package. The Division, for this reason, has developed a set of review guidelines for the assessment of these general education courses (Learning and Teaching Services Division, 2003). These
guidelines identify a set of course elements including: announcements, course information, planner or syllabus, staff information, course documents, lesson notes or learning units, textbooks/printed manuals, assignments, communication tools, discussion forums, groups, external links, and student tools. For each element a number of specific performance indicators are given. For example, in Learning and Teaching Services Division (2003) under announcements is found the following list of indicators:

A welcome message that a) Has a welcoming tone, b) Motivates the students to take the course, c) Tells the students where to begin the course, d) Includes the instructor’s name and contact information or tells the student where to find this information. (p. 1).

These guidelines are an indication of the view of hybrid courses held by the Learning and Teaching Services Division and, in the absence of any other evaluative tool for the assessment of such courses; these guidelines might be adapted for use in other areas within the College.

The Learning and Teaching Services Division does not appear to have developed an explicit statement of what constitutes a hybrid course. There are, however, assumptions or allusions about hybrid courses found in the documentation available from the Division that reveals a pedagogical approach that defines a hybrid course beyond a simple definition based on mode of delivery. These assumptions are all the more evident when contrasting the minimum expectations of corporate policy for hybrid courses with the richer vision of hybrid learning held by the Learning and Teaching Services Division. Recall that the only requirement made by senior management upon faculty was the posting of the course outline and syllabus along with a welcoming message. Compare this minimal requirement with, for example, the assertions made in a memorandum to faculty. “Active learning in the classroom
is one feature of successful hybrid courses … using BLACKBOARD® to create a learning community can increase learner interaction/collaboration/self-direction … teaching a hybrid course is different from providing all instruction face-to-face” (Learning and Teaching Services Division, 2007a, p.3). These remarks suggest outcomes-based teaching with its emphasis upon active and collaborative learning. The reliance on the foundation document the “Professor of the 21st century” (Algonquin College, 2004) is further evidence of the Division’s expectations. This profile is a statement of outcomes-based teaching.

In summary, corporate policy and expectations dealing with hybrid courses are not clearly stated. There is no policy statement defining hybrid courses although there appears to be a common understanding that what is meant by this term is any course taught one hour online with two hours in the classroom. Expectations of hybrid courses are also unexpressed, but implied. Hybrid courses are to support outcomes-based education, as well as active and collaborative learning.

The Observed Course Design

In the community college system, the course outline is the foundation document mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Appendix 6 contains the outline for the observed course. There are six learning outcomes identified in the outline. The student on completion of the course should be able to (1) write concise, coherent, correct prose for an intended audience, (2) write vocationally oriented business correspondence, (3) write vocationally oriented reports, (4) advocate orally and in writing, (5) critique media representation of the disabled, and (6) use group process in managing meetings. The course description states:

This is a course, which develops and improves the skills necessary for Developmental Services Workers to function efficiently and effectively as professionals in their field.
Students will demonstrate the ability to write letters, memoranda, and reports, which meet the required standards of the workplace. In addition, students will show their grasp of the advocacy process and their ability to argue and persuade in written and oral form (Course Outline, p. 1).

The syllabus is a separate document from the course outline and it contains the weekly activities completed in the classroom and online, the evaluation scheme detailing how the student will earn the credit, and a course protocol governing student behaviour. There were eight assignments to be completed. The context of all assignments was vocational in nature; i.e., the assignments simulated actual written work encountered in the workplace. One assignment was team assessed. The teacher evaluated the written expression of a major term paper assigned by another instructor in the vocational program. Finally, the teacher assigned some 15% of the final mark in the course to weekly participation in the online and in class activities. The evaluation scheme combined online and in-class participation by the student.

The teacher based the assessment of students on attendance in class and logging into the Web shell of the course. Students earned no portion of the overall grade from work completed solely online. This emphasis may be indicative of the importance, which the teacher placed on the online portion of the class. Appendix 7 contains the syllabus used in the observed course.

Table 1 outlines a typical classroom session. I constructed this outline from observations made in the classroom. The teacher used this lesson plan consistently throughout the term although there were minor variations in the later part of the semester. These variations included changes to the order of activities and on occasion, the face-to-face session began with the group exercise followed by the mini-lecture. Another variation involved the exercises themselves rather than permit group participation on a voluntary basis, the teacher,
at least in one instance, assigned students to specific groups and, on one occasion, the teacher asked students to work independently. Paper-based learning aids supported most of the exercises, but again one notable exception occurred when the class analyzed selected film clips. There were some face-to-face sessions held at the end of term where the type of outcome asked of students was oral communication rather than written communication, for example, the role-play in some of the simulation exercises. Typically, the teacher conformed to one basic format for the classroom sessions with minor variations in order of activities, types of learning aids used, learning outcomes and group participation.

Table 1: Typical Lesson Plan for a Classroom Session

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Learning Aid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:00 – 1:05</td>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal greeting such as “Good Afternoon”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:05 – 1:35</td>
<td>2. Instruction</td>
<td>Computer and data projector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A mini-lecture on the topic for the session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:35 – 2:00</td>
<td>3. Practice</td>
<td>Hand outs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A group exercise based on the content of the mini-lecture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00 – 2:15</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:15 – 2:30</td>
<td>4. Debrief of Exercise</td>
<td>Blackboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30 – 2:40</td>
<td>5. Weekly Assignment</td>
<td>Evaluation Rubric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:40 – 2:45</td>
<td>6. Feedback</td>
<td>Occasional use of the classroom blackboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Return of marked assignments with comments by teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*BLACKBOARD®, a commercially available software package delivered the online portion of the course. The College implemented the software throughout in a consistent manner in order to provide the student with a sense of continuity in look and feel of a course from one instructor to another. There is a limited range of features, such as choice of colour, the use of banners that the individual teacher can use to provide a unique presentation of his
or her course. The teacher enabled all the features of the software in this instance, but the teacher did not use all the enabled features. Students found material under the announcements, course information, course documents, and assignments areas. The teacher posted no information to the staff information, discussion board, external links, and the grade book sections. The teacher did not exploit all the functionality of the technology.

Table 2 summarizes a typical lesson plan for the online sessions. I constructed this summary based on the observations that I made. The online material was not available from the beginning of the course; instead, the material was made available on a week-to-week basis as the course unfolded. The principal organizational tool was the course syllabus found in the course information section. The teacher posted material under weekly labels in the assignments and course document sections. Instructions did not accompany these postings explaining how students were to use the documents. The student found these instructions enclosed in the opened documents. The relationship between the online activity and those occurring in the classroom was preparatory in nature.

When considering how the two typical lesson plans interact together a pattern emerges that the teacher used throughout the course. The pattern established by the teacher involved three distinct phases. These were: (1) preparatory work assigned online, (2) reinforcement of new information and practice of newly acquired skills in the classroom, and (3) evaluation of student comprehension and mastery online.

Table 2: Typical Lesson Plan for Online Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Learning Aid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>Read attached notes prior to the classroom session</td>
<td>Course Documents Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Notes posted on the week’s topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Example posted that models the information found in the notes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I asked Barb to comment on the degree to which the observed course achieved the corporate expectations established for hybrid courses. In keeping with the strategy used to implement the hybrid initiative at the College, she was reluctant to do so. The implementing strategy emphasized voluntary participation by the faculty accompanied by professional development from the Learning and Teaching Services Division. The Division assumed no role in terms of assessment leaving this aspect of the implementation to the various program managers throughout the College. While refusing to analyze the course, Barb did make suggestions for how it might be further developed. These suggestions for improvement are interesting because the ideas expressed reveal her vision for hybrid learning.

The imbalance between the in-class and online portions of the course is reflected in Barb’s comments. None of her suggestions for future development involved the in-class activities. She directed her remarks solely to the online portion of the course. She suggested that the teacher use quizzes or some other online activity to reinforce and test the assigned reading. For the sake of clarity, she recommended that the teacher turn off the unused features of the software in order to make navigation throughout the Web shell clearer for the students. The teacher could enhance clarity by providing descriptions for the files and folders posted to the program shell. Finally, the teacher could improve navigation if she used weekly announcements to help guide the students through the posted material. If the teacher were to develop writing skills online as well as in the classroom, the learning activities would be better. Such activities should involve online group work and be varied to include more than
just assigned reading. Ongoing feedback could be supported online using the grade book feature.

These recommendations for further development emanated from Barb’s concept of hybrid teaching. In her comments she expressed the belief that both the in-class and out-of-class components of a hybrid course needed to be a “legitimate, valuable and integrated part” of the total course. She asserted that the depth and extent of learning assigned online needed to be equivalent to that undertaken within the classroom. There should be ease in navigating the Web shell assigned to the hybrid course. Active learning activities online should be linked to real-world applications of the ideas involved in the activities. The teacher should use the technology to build a sense of the learning community. As well, the teacher could use the technology to accommodate different learning styles and ability levels. This view of hybrid learning Barb characterized as a “learning-centered approach within an outcomes-based framework.”

**Student Reaction**

There was a general lack of engagement in the course by students as suggested by the poor attendance. Table 3 shows the rate of attendance at the face-to-face sessions. I collected these statistics as the result of a simple head count taken during the observation of each classroom session. I noted the students present ten minutes after the class had commenced. Changes in attendance throughout the class period I did not record.

| Table 3: Rate of Attendance at the Face-to-Face Sessions |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Jan 14 | Jan 20 | Jan 28 | Feb 11 | Feb 18 | Mar11 | Mar18 | Apr1 | Apr8 | Apr15 |
| 59%    | 59%    | 56%    | 56%    | 41%    | 44%    | 44%    | 67% | 41%    | 37%    |
Table 4 shows the rate of attendance online. The software generated these statistics automatically. The statistics represent the percentage of students who logged into the Web shell during the period between one class and the next. When I compared the two rates of attendance, it became apparent that while the number of online logins remained constant throughout term that was not the case with attendance in the classroom. More students signed into the Web shell than attended class on any date. The attendance in class while constant during the first half of the term fell off in the second half. This attendance pattern is suggestive that students were using the technology to monitor the progress of the class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jan14</th>
<th>Jan20</th>
<th>Jan28</th>
<th>Feb11</th>
<th>Feb18</th>
<th>Mar11</th>
<th>Mar18</th>
<th>Apr1</th>
<th>Apr8</th>
<th>Apr15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>89%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

One key conclusion seems inescapable in the foregoing comparison between corporate expectations and Judy’s hybrid course; there are two sets of corporate expectations. Senior management has established in policy a minimum set of expectations dealing with hybrid learning as a mode of delivery, while the instructional leadership of the College, as exemplified by Barb, a member of the Learning and Teaching Services Division, have developed a vision of hybrid teaching and learning. This vision stems from the application of a learning-centered, outcomes-based pedagogy to online teaching, as well as the major claims made by the literature on online and hybrid courses, for example, claims relating to increased intellectual depth, increased student collaboration, and the fostering of learning communities. Judy’s course came close to meeting the minimum requirements set out by the policy established by senior management; however, her achievement fell short of fulfilling the vision developed by the instructional leadership of the College. This lack of accomplishment
was aggravated further when I took into consideration the student reaction to the course. The students’ lack of engagement and their use of the technology to minimize the demands of the course upon them contrasts sharply with the enriched experience enabled through online and hybrid learning envisaged by the instructional leadership.
CHAPTER V.

FINDINGS II: A NARRATIVE ACCOUNT OF THE COURSE FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

The findings presented here are in a set of narratives. These narratives tell the story of the examined hybrid course as it unfolded throughout the semester from the perspective of the different participants. There is a separate narrative for each of the participants involved in the study, including Judy, the teacher; Brianna and Keri, the two students; and myself as the researcher. The basis of these narratives is upon the data collected during the study. In some instances such as Judy’s interview in Eric’s office, I was not present. The scene was reconstructed on the basis of what Judy reported to me in our interview. The dialogue recorded in the narrative is a direct quotation from the notes of those interviews.

Judy: A Teacher’s Story

The narrative that follows is a composite based upon the information collected during the course of this research. Four interviews with Judy took place along with personal observation of her in the classroom in each of the face-to-face sessions held throughout the term. Access to the online portion of the course made available through the course management software augmented this evidentiary base.

The interview protocol involved taping all interviews, the making of observation notes as the interview occurred, and the utilization of semi-structured questions. The questions used in the first interview were developed from the literature in particular the work of Reeves and Reeves (1997). Subsequent questions arose from observations made by me in the classroom or online.
In Eric’s Office: Judy’s Reservations about Hybrid Courses

Judy’s boss Eric looked over the top of his glasses at Judy and watched her reaction.

“You don’t seem pleased.” The manager Eric assigned each teacher’s course load every term.

“Is there a problem with your teaching assignment for next term?”

Judy hesitated. She was about to sign off automatically on her workload form, but instead put down her pen and waited. “Yes, I suppose there is a problem. I see that you want me to deliver the first year English course in hybrid format. Don’t you remember our conversation from last term about not using hybrid courses in first year?” “Yes, I do, but you need to remember that the College policy is that all programs must deliver twenty percent of the curriculum using the hybrid format.”

“But you agreed.”

“Judy you know that there has been an ongoing problem with the English courses in first year. There is a lack of consistency in the courses from year to year because full-time faculty do not teach them. By using the hybrid approach the College can ensure some standardization in the delivery of the curriculum that is independent of the faculty assigned to teach a specific course.”

“But you agreed that it was inappropriate to use BLACKBOARD® with students new to the College and who were also weak in English. After all this is remedial English and you’ve made a decision that they must learn in a manner that is dependent on good reading skills.”

1 Each manager must discuss the assigned workload with the individual faculty under the provisions of section 11.02 A1 (a) of the general agreement. In the case of the winter term this meeting would be held no later than the 13th of November.

2 This policy was set forth in the 5 Year Strategic Plan 2003-2008, see key operational outcomes - academic, goal number ASP 9B.
“Judy the basic requirement for admission to the College is grade 12 English.”

She could see that Eric was calm but determined. She was a little intimidated about how far she could push her point of view. “Yes, but we don’t test their reading levels anymore.”

“True, but all applicants have completed grade twelve English or its equivalent.”

She sighed and tried again. “Eric you agreed that the fall English course would not be taught as a hybrid.”¹

“Yes and it won’t be in the future. The students need an introduction to hybrid courses as soon as possible. That is the reason why I am asking you to deliver this course as a hybrid during the winter term. First year students will have had plenty of time to be orientated to the College system during the fall.”

“Alright then, can you at least not reduce the hours of instruction? For a significant number of these students hybrid instruction has made the learning of writing skills more difficult for them. They have not been shy saying so. In fact, I have had a few students in the past who have come right out and said that putting an English course in as a hybrid was the worst decision that they had ever come across.”

“No. I cannot. It is College policy to reduce a traditional three-hour course to two hours in the classroom and one hour online. Really, there is no reduction. The student receives three hours of instruction.”

“Eric, losing that hour of face-to-face contact doesn’t do weak students any favours.”

“Thank you for your openness in expressing your views with me, but, my hands are tied. We are obliged to implement the College policy.”¹

¹ First year English courses in the fall term were converted to hybrid format on a trial basis. On the recommendation of the co-ordinator of English these courses reverted to traditional delivery. Teacher’s written feedback, lines 67-79.
In Judy’s Office: Prepping for the New Term

Looking out the window, Judy watched the snow falling gently. It was going to be an early winter this year, she thought. Here it is almost the beginning of December. She had so much to do. Finish the present term with all its associated marking, get ready for Christmas, get ready for the new term. She wondered. “Can I do it all in time?”

She went back to her desktop and began logging into the system. The screen display was different. She was disoriented. Then she remembered that the help-desk had sent a message about a new version of the software released for the new term. “How different can the new version be from the old one?” she thought, continuing to type. She hit a key and nothing happened. Apparently, the new version was not going to be as intuitive as she had hoped. “Damn, all I wanted to do was copy over the old version of the course into the new shell. I will have to go see Dennis at the help-desk and find out how to manipulate the new version.”

“Hey Judy, can I help you?”

“Sure Dennis. I need a bit of help using the new version of Blackboard®.”

“No problem. What kind of experience have you had with the software?”

“Great. My work experience with the Web has been positive, at least from my point of view. I started using it before the hybrid initiative began at the College. I used my own website to post notes on before Blackboard® so the transition was quite easy for me. I have gone from just posting notes to running just about everything through the software. Things

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1 Judy’s reservations were expressed in the 1st interview, lines 87-108.

2 The setting of this scenario is drawn from my common experience shared with Judy as a community college teacher.

3 Again, the introduction of a new version of software introduced between semesters is drawn from personal experience teaching at the same institution as Judy.

57
like learning materials and related assignments. I am trying to incorporate more stuff like using the discussion boards and what not but that is slow going. It is the same story for things like the online group activities made possible by the platform. I’m trying but it is slow going.”¹

“Well, it does sound like you know what you’re doing and what you want. How much experience have you had with hybrids?”

“Oh, including the pilot year this is my third year teaching using the hybrid model. This particular course I’m trying to get ready is the second time it will be offered as a hybrid.”²

“I’m interested to know what kind of experience your students have with the software. They’re a first year group, right?”

“This is their first hybrid with me, but they have taken other hybrids in first term as part of their vocational program.”

Dennis paused and thought for a moment. “Do you think they are comfortable with the software? I mean are they experienced in using all the features of it. Or do you think that they are a relatively unsophisticated group of users?”

“No they are fine with it. As I said, I have not used discussion groups with them very much, so I do not know how comfortable they are with that feature. Last year when I did discussion groups for the first time there was a bit of panic. The students did not know what to do with it or how to use it, but this waned with familiarity.”³

¹ Judy’s aspirations for the development of this hybrid course was expressed in the 1st interview, lines 75-80.
² Judy’s level of experience with the software, 1st interview, lines 83-89.
³ Judy described the students’ experience with BLACKBOARD® in 1st interview, lines 128-135.
“It’s been an interesting chat with you. If you would like to learn how to use the new version, the easiest way would be to sign up for a workshop. The next available one is the week after exams.”

“Okay. Thanks very much.” Judy turned and left the help centre for her office on the third floor. She would wait until the beginning of next term and sort out things then. There was just too much to do right now.

Back in her office, she sat down at the desk. She thought to herself, “Well that was a waste of time. I wish someone responsible for the IT infrastructure were sensitive to the various time restraints faced by the classroom teacher. What knob would introduce a new version of software between semesters?” She sat thinking for a while. “Okay, what do students need at the beginning of term?” Then Judy remembered that the College only required the course outline and syllabus to be available from the first day. So she would make sure to post these documents in time and the rest of the course could be built as the term unfolded. This would mean that the material was available each week rather than all at once at the beginning of term. “That would be okay,” she decided.1

*The First Day of Classes: Course Logistics*

Judy walked into the room and scanned the class. Mentally she started putting names to faces. It was funny how, in such a brief period as the Christmas holidays, her memory could play tricks on her as she tried to recall everyone’s name. Looking out again she saw Brianna sitting with her friends Carol and Joanne. There was Keri sitting by herself. It was time to get started.2

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1 Only the course outline and part of the syllabus were available on the first day of classes in the new term.

2 The students were obviously familiar with the teacher and there was a rapport already in existence before the first day of classes as a result of working together in the previous term (field notes for session 1, lines 104-106).
The general hubbub in the room lowered as Judy moved to the front of the room and said, “Good afternoon everyone. Welcome back to school. I hope that you’ve all had a good vacation and are eager to start the new term.” Everyone was silent now in anticipation.

Judy thought for a moment. It was important to allay any possible fears of another grammar course. “In this course you will not hear me use the big ‘G’ word, grammar. This is a communications course that will help you learn to write accurately and effectively. The exercises and examples we will use throughout the term are all from situations appropriate to D.S.W. [Developmental Services Worker] work. I think that you will enjoy the class much more than last term’s grammar course because there is more room for discussion.”

She continued onto her next point. “You’ll notice that there is no marking scheme included in the syllabus posted online. I am waiting until another of your vocational teachers gets back to me before finalizing the evaluation scheme. Rather than make you write an extended essay for this class, I would prefer if you wrote an essay in one of your core courses that was marked as both a vocational and an English assignment. Are there any questions?”

A scattering of hands went up. It seemed that some students needed to winkle out more information about marking. “All I can say now is that there will not be any tests or exams in this course. The evaluation will be based on weekly assignments done either in-group or individually. The actual scheme will be made available for you to see soon.”

“No exams or tests?”

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1 The teacher’s choice of a vocational context for this course and a de-emphasizing of a more formal grammatical approach is based on 1st interview, lines 123-126.

2 The details about the marking scheme are from field notes for session 1, lines 25-28.

3 Students’ anxiety about marking is found in the field notes for session 1, lines 32-36.
“Nope, no exams or tests, you will need to complete just exercises and assignments.”
Judy could see the class visibly relax. “If there are no more questions, it’s time to get started.”
She dimmed the lights, turned on the data projector, and began the lesson.

Two hours later Judy finished the last of the lesson plan for the day. It had gone well
she thought. Mac approached as she packed up to leave the room.

“I want to thank you for agreeing to let me observe your class for my thesis. It was a
useful exercise for me. I found it really interesting to watch an experienced teacher in the
classroom.”

“How was it so?”

“Well, for example, many things that I do rather self-consciously in my own teaching,
you manage to do without any apparent effort.”

“What do you mean?”

“Here’s an example. You do not use an agenda to provide an overview and yet the
students never seem to be lost about what is happening. Instead, you flag the introduction of a
new topic with an overhead projected from the Web page. The overheads cue all the students
something new is being discussed. This is true even though the print is so small that I doubt
anyone from the second row much less from the back of the room can read the slide.”

“Oh, I never thought about it. Is there something else?”

“Well, yes. You use a repeated pattern to structure the class. You introduce new
material with an overhead slide, and then provide a mini-lecture followed by a question
period. After this, you distribute a group exercise, the work is completed and then you debrief
the class at the end. This was the pattern that repeated itself all through today’s session.”

“You know Mac, I was never actually aware of what I was doing.”
You probably were not. However, the students seemed to notice other unconscious cues too. The most notable was the use of your voice. You spoke with much animation and enthusiasm when explaining things for the first time. The students seemed to notice and stopped talking. Yet once you summarized and moved on to another topic your voice changed and the level of noise in the room seemed to increase as students’ attention shifted."

“If you say so that’s what must have happened, but I don’t remember what I was doing. Do you know yet when we are going to meet for the first interview?”

“This class is held Friday afternoons so I thought it would be best to hold the interview just before the next class. Are you free on Wednesday?”

“Yes, I’m free from one until two o’clock. That would work out nicely because I hold my office hours at noon and then have a co-coordinators’ meeting with the other English teachers at three. Where shall we meet?”

“Oh, I’ll come to your office.”

First Interview: Judy’s Pedagogical views

Judy looked up at the doorway in mid-sentence. “Oh hello, I’ll be with you in just a minute. I’m just finishing up with one of my students.”

“Take your time. I’ll find some coffee.”

The student was leaving the office when he came around the corner carrying his coffee. “Thanks for seeing me. I really do appreciate your participating in the study. Today’s interview is about two things. I’d like your impression of the Reeves article about the various

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1 Classroom procedure, student reactions, and the teacher’s apparent lack of conscious awareness is based upon the field notes for session 1, lines 90 - 100.
dimensions of online teaching and the other thing is to identify the design decisions that you
made when putting the course together.”

“I’m not up on the vocabulary the article used,” She said as she began to search her
desk. “Just let me find what I wrote after you gave me this paper. No, I cannot find it. That’s
annoying.”

“It’s okay. I will try to explain the dimensions as we go along. A dichotomy expresses
each dimension. For example, the dimension concerning educational philosophy involves the
spectrum from instructivist on one side to a constructivist viewpoint on the other. How do
you see yourself in those terms?”

“I am definitely aiming at a constructivist kind of design because this course is pretty
much based on scenarios and problem solving. So as I said they are given the scenarios and
models and figure out how they can apply it.”

“What about your notions of learning theory. Are you more behavioral or cognitive in
approach?”

“I was more cognitive in my approach before the introduction of hybrids. When we
began implementing hybrid courses I thought well some of this stuff has to go on the
computer so I have to figure out what it is and have to give the students rewards for doing the
stuff. So I think I slipped back more into a behavioral approach as a result.”

“Do you think that this is a result of the medium itself? I mean are you being forced
because of some innate nature of computer assisted learning to be more behavioral?”

“Yes.”

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1 Reeves and Reeves (1997).
“The next set of dimensions deals with the issue of goal orientation. I mean does the course sharply focus on a set of goals or are they more general in nature. I suppose the question is about the skill set the student will take away from the course on completion.”

“The course goals are both. I want both. They need to come out learning rules and formats. Rules that are for writing and formats for reports. I focus very much on these goals. They also need to come out with an understanding that they will need to adapt their communication style depending on the context.”

“Speaking of context what are your thoughts about the orientation of tasks performed as part of the course? Is the orientation academic or more authentic in nature?”

“The course is designed to encourage authentic tasks. I mean that they are set in a realistic context that is vocationally relevant to the students.”

“What about the student’s source of motivation?”

“I’d love a student to be motivated intrinsically, but feel that the course actually supports a student to be more extrinsically motivated.”

“Why do you say this?”

“It’s because of the nature of the course. English is not a vocational course and, therefore, students view it as a requirement apart from the other aspects of their training.”

“The next dimension to consider is the teacher’s role. What are your views on this question?”

“My preferred style is facilitative and I think that the design of this course supports that kind of role.”

“Does the course support collaborative learning strategies?”

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1Comments on educational philosophy, learning theory and goal orientation are based on the transcript of the 1st interview with the teacher, lines 200-260.
“Oh, yes. There are group exercises and discussion most of which are carried out in
the face-to-face sessions rather than online because the students need the non-verbal signs of
communication in order to communicate clearly.”

“How the course support a flexible structure that would allow the student options on
how to work toward completion?”

“The course is somewhat flexible. There is control over the content and how the
students are to interact with the material, but there is some freedom in terms of time restraints
and when tasks are to be accomplished.”

“Is there anything else?”

“I seem to remember that the article spoke about metacognitive support and cultural
issues. I didn’t consider those aspects when designing the course.”

“The last thing I’d like to discuss today is the course design considerations you made
when putting up this course.”

“What sort of things were you thinking?”

“I meant, for example, how you chose the learning activities done in class and those
that would be done online? Another consideration of interest is how the two delivery modes
support each other. Are the online and face-to-face sessions integrated or are they
independent modules of the course?”

“Okay. I see what you mean. I decided on practical grounds what content to put
online and to use in the classroom. My thoughts were could this material be put online?
Could the student complete the work independently online?”

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1 The material dealing with the remaining dimensions of learning is based upon the field notes taken at the 1st
interview with the teacher, lines 69-93. The audio tape recording of the actual interview was too garbled to be
transcribed at this point.
“What is the relationship between the online activities and those occurring in the classroom?”

“The model I use is to introduce concepts online and then the students apply them in class. Occasionally I reverse this process and I introduce new material in class and then students practice online. This area has been a problem for me in delivering the course. I think that the very first time I taught this course as a hybrid the online portion merely replicated the way in which I used my web page to support the classroom activities.”

“So, what is the relationship between the modes in your opinion?”

“I think that this course integrates both environments.”

Cancelled Class Friday, 4th February

Judy put the telephone down. It had been the kids’ school phoning to say that they were sick and needed to go home. She checked her watch. There was just enough time to post an announcement. She began to compose: “I’ve had to go home to look after sick kiddies, so today’s class is cancelled. However, I do not want us to fall behind, so sometime before 1:00 today; I will be posting a tutorial on writing progress and investigation reports. And, of course, I will be posting tasks for you to accomplish (it can’t be all good news, right?)”. “That should do it,” she thought. It would buy her enough time to get the kids from school and then post the information afterward.

The kids were in their beds upstairs and she now had some time to finish up. She sat at her laptop typing: “There are 2 places to check here on BLACKBOARD®. First, in Course Documents, you will find a tutorial on writing progress reports. As part of that, there is an exercise to complete. You will also find (although not for the next hour or so), information on

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1 This portion of the narrative is based on the field notes from the 1st interview, lines 95-106.

2 Text of the first message posted Friday, 4th February to the announcements board in BLACKBOARD®.
writing investigation reports. That will be the topic of your assignment for this week, which brings me to the second place to check - the Assignments folder. However, so that the assignment actually makes sense to you, give me another hour to post my “lecture” on investigation reports to Course Documents.” She paused, thinking that there was something else to add. “Also - very important- I recognize that some of you may not be on campus today, if this is your only class. And I know that some of you have placement at the beginning of next week. So, will you please submit your incident reports to me via the Assignments Drop Box outside of Room C-230 no later than Wednesday of next week?”

Cancelled Class Friday, 25th February

Last night Judy’s daughter Beth had become ill. The flu had gone around the entire family by now. Judy hoped it would not interfere with the family’s plans to ski in the following week. It was reading week for the College and she was looking forward to some time with her husband and kids. Judy really did not feel that she could leave Beth alone for the day. She did not want to but it seemed the best thing to do was to cancel the afternoon class.

Judy sat down at the kitchen table and typed on her laptop: “My daughter is sick with the flu today, so I won’t be in. We will cover assessments after the break when we look at plans for service. There is, however, a small task for you under the Assignments section, Week 8. As well, if you are on campus today, will you please leave your client profile assignments in the Drop Box outside of Room C230, so that I can get as many marked as possible before next class. Have a restful break week!”

First Class after Break: Attendance

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1 Text of the second message posted Friday, 4th February to the announcements board in BLACKBOARD®.

2 Text of the message posted Friday, 25th February to the announcements board in BLACKBOARD®.
Judy looked out over the class and wondered where everyone was. True it was the first day back from the break, but even so she’d noticed fewer people had been attending the class for a few weeks before. She would check the stats after class to see if people were using the online material as a reason for not coming to class.

As she waited for the class to come to order, Judy pondered, reminding herself that attendance was a personal choice of the students and really their responsibility. It was not something for her to take personally. Not all of this was a vocational core course and that probably explained the situation. Nevertheless, she remembered how she felt when Mac had asked her about attendance in their last interview together. For so many years, student attendance and participation had been a sore point with her. It was less so now, but their conversation had made her wrestle with the issue again, and darn it, she had rather liked being complacent about it.

Second Interview: the Teacher’s Assumptions about Student Attitudes toward English

Mac came into her office juggling notebooks, a mic with a speaker, and the audio-recorder, looking flustered and disorganized. Judy offered him a chair.

“Thanks for seeing me again,” He said as he sorted out the mess. “I’d like to talk with you today about the students’ reaction to the course.”

“Ok. Well, I think that there is always a sense that there is a perception that this is still an English course and that they are going to have to do writing and that scares people.”

“I see. You feel that students or that some students may be intimidated by writing. Is there any other reaction that you feel is present?”

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1 The teacher’s reaction is taken from comments made in the 2nd teacher’s interview, lines 15-32.

2 The complacency of the teacher is based upon the 2nd teacher’s interview, lines 155-159.

3 1st teacher’s interview, lines 186-187.
“What do you mean?”

“Well, for example, what in your opinion is the perception of the students in this course compared to their earlier experience with the grammar course in first term?”

“I think that it is a fairly positive experience because they are coming off of the ENL1813 course which is an absolutely horrid course. It is very much the kind of course where one stands up teaches the point and then they get a writing assignment. They do not get to discuss anything in that course. It is either a comma here or a semi-colon there. It is either right or wrong with no discussion about it. I think that the fact that there is more discussion integrated in the activities in this course means that they will be more favourable toward it. I can hear them say in my head, ‘thank heavens, she didn’t talk about semi-colons’.”

“If you think that students are intimidated what did you do to deal with this problem in the first class?”

“Writing makes people a little nervous. I am trying to say to myself. ‘Did I see that in the class? Did I see them being nervous or uncomfortable?’ I do not think so because it was an easy first class. I started with how to write letters and memos because these forms are something that is familiar and it is easy to move into other things from there. I don’t throw something difficult at them in the beginning.”

“Just a second, I need to check to make sure that this recorder is taping. I have had such problems in some of my other interviews with the thing stopping and my not noticing until the end of the session. Okay. Can you go on and possibly tell me how you’ve incorporated discussion in a writing class?”

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1 1st teacher’s interview, lines 148 - 162.

2 1st teacher’s interview, lines 188-191.
“Sure. The scenarios I have chosen to use incorporate discussion in the course. These examples, I would say, are about ninety percent drawn from their vocation.”

“Why’s that?”

“The choice of vocational scenarios will make the course more relevant to them. They do not see the grammar course as something that will be relevant to them at all. In their minds, this course is apart from their program. All of a sudden with this course they can see that there are writing situations that are relevant to being a D.S.W. [Developmental Services Worker] student.”

“Do you have any indication that students are aware of this?”

“Oh, yes. I’ve received email and comments from a couple of students who have mentioned that the assignments and tasks performed in this course are valuable and that they need to learn how to do them because of their vocational nature.”

“I’ve one more question about this topic. Has there been an impact on student performance in your opinion?”

“Their writing is better, not good, but better than it was. I suspect that they put more energy into the writing for this course because I use vocationally relevant case studies.”

A Typical Class in the Second Half of Term: Changes in Procedure

Judy came into class with a sense of anticipation. She had noticed that the students had become bored recently. Today she would mix things up and stir the pot a bit in an attempt

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1 1st teacher’s interview, lines 125-126.
2 1st teacher’s interview, lines 166-169.
3 2nd teacher’s interview, lines 62-68.
4 2nd teacher’s interview, lines 93-95.
to challenge the students’ lethargy. Rather than a writing exercise, the day’s lesson was going to begin a series of simulations where students would practice oral as well as written communications. “Hello everyone, today we will begin something new. We will simulate a business meeting so that you can practice oral communication skills. You will need to know the dynamics of group behaviour that is to say the different functions that people take in a meeting situation. As well, I will ask that you submit written minutes of the simulation in order to practice good writing habits. Are there any questions so far?”

The class had stopped stirring and was listening to what would happen next. “Okay, if not then we will move right into our first exercise that will show you the various dynamics of group behaviour. Would you please form into the groups written on the blackboard? I’d like you working with different people for this exercise.”

There was a bit of movement visible in the class, but some hesitancy. There was a collective groan. “No, really I want you working in the assigned groups and not with your friends for this. Please do it now. Thanks.”

Judy reflected on the completed exercise and thought that although the students had been initially hesitant things had gone well. They seemed to recognize the different roles involved in the dynamics of a group and were aware of their own behaviour.

“Would everyone get back into their own seats now so we can move on with the simulation? You will need to use your case assessment notes prepared a couple of weeks ago. Go ahead and review them to refresh your memory.”

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1 The teacher acknowledged the students potential boredom with writing and the class in general, 2nd interview, lines 29-32.

2 This narrative is based on the observations of the face-to-face sessions made in the 8th field notes, lines 20-27.

3 The teacher’s reason for assigning students to specific groups was to avoid group work becoming too social rather than work oriented, 3rd interview, lines 388-391.
“Does anyone need more time? No. Okay then we will begin with the simulation of a case conference meeting.” Pointing to the left of the class, Judy said, “This half of the class will take the minutes of the meeting. The remainder of the class will be participants in the case conference. Once you complete the first conference, you will switch positions and do another conference meeting. Clear?”

Judy arranged the students in a quasi-circle and sat in the middle where she could act as the chair. Each student presented a client profile to the group and then asked for advice on resolving a specific problem. The students’ lack of ability in applying their subject knowledge to the situation frustrated Judy often. She found that in order to keep the simulation going she constantly had to prod the students with suggestions about how to deal with the situation. Really, she wondered where their passion was for this kind of work.

“Well thanks folks. That is it for the day. We’ll meet next week to discuss writing résumés and taking job interviews.” Judy scanned the minutes submitted at the end of the exercise. They were surprisingly good. The simulation had worked, but she was still puzzled about why the students, some of whom were very good students, had not been able to transfer their knowledge from one course to another.

Fourth Interview: Judy Reflects on Her Role as a Teacher and Her Overall Achievement

“Hey Judy, this is our final interview together and I was looking over my notes to see what I should ask you about today. It seems that we ought to talk about your thoughts on the role of the teacher in this course as well as your opinion about how well the course has gone.”

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1 This reflection was shared with me after the fact during our interview and not immediately with the students.
2 The teacher’s directive behavior during the group exercise is based on the 3rd teacher’s interview, lines 112-140.
3 The students’ inability to apply subject knowledge to the exercise is noted in the 3rd teacher’s interview, lines 189-192; their lack of passion for the subject is noticed by the teacher in the 3rd teacher’s interview, lines 178-180.
4 The teacher was surprised by the quality of the written minutes, 3rd teacher’s interview, lines 326-332.
“That’s okay with me.”

“Right then, in our very first interview you mentioned that your preferred role as a teacher was that of the facilitator. How do you feel that was accomplished in terms of how this course actually turned out?”

“I do prefer a facilitative role. Thinking back on the course I can see that my role changed. It became more facilitating at the end rather than at the beginning of the course. I started by teaching models and explaining new concepts in mini-lectures. At the end of the course, more of the classroom activities were simulations of work scenarios and in these I think my role was more facilitative and less didactic.”

“I can see that change, but weren’t you still the focus of class activity throughout the term? I mean that even in the simulations you were instrumental in directing what happened. For example, during the case conference meetings it was you and not a student who chaired the simulation.”

“Yes, I have to be the chair. I do not want to be, but in a large class, it is not possible to give the role to one of the students and still be fair about workload. In the past when a class has been small, I have made each student act as the chair. It’s just not fair to impose more workload on some and not others when the class is too big for the role to be shared by everyone.”

“Here’s my last question. At this point in the term can you say whether or not you have accomplished all of your course outcomes?”

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1 The teacher’s comments from the 3rd interview, lines 397-403.

2 3rd teacher’s interview, lines 418-430.
Laughing Judy said, “Um, I should be. I darn well better have accomplished them by this point because we’re at the end of term.”

“I guess I should rephrase the question. I know that you have completed the course. I’m interested to know if you are happy with the outcome in terms of the performance of the students.”

“I see what you mean. Well, I am happy in general although there are some exceptions in terms of some individuals. I am happy with the level of writing accomplished by the class overall. They have gone further than I had anticipated that they would. Really, they’ve gone a long way to meeting that writing objective.”

“When you think about the course what parts of it are you most proud of?”

“Oh, that’s easy. I like the scenario stuff. I am most proud of that part. I mean everything they do in this course is as close to their vocation as possible. I mean everything is scenario related. The scenarios are real not just realistic. They are real scenarios that have come from either my own experience or other people’s experience. It’s a way into getting the students excited about writing or at least accepting of having to write.”

In Judy’s Office at the End of Term: Preparing for a BLACKBOARD® Workshop

Judy sat at her desk pondering as she looked out the window. The workshop organizers had asked that people come with a list of things that they needed help with adding to their hybrid courses. She thought about her experience in the last term. If she were honest with herself she would admit that the material online needed to be more interesting, more interactive. Perhaps there would be a way she could incorporate peer editing and more online

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1 Paraphrase of comments from the 3rd teacher’s interview, lines 740-741.

2 Student achievement noted in 3rd teacher’s interview, lines 743-748.

3 The teacher speaks about her success in 3rd teacher’s interview, lines 720-729.
problem solving in her course.\(^1\) She had tried to use the discussion board in one of her assignments but not much had happened. In fact, none of the students had used the group discussion board to complete the exercise. Therefore, she added discussion boards to her list and promised herself to ask how other teachers had used the feature effectively. Putting her pen down, she stopped writing. Nope there was nothing much more to add. She was comfortable with the mechanics of using the technology. Next year she would concentrate on making small improvements, as her workload would permit it.\(^2\)

*Brianna’s Story: “If it were not a hybrid course it would have been much the same”*

The narrative that follows is a construction based on the evidence collected. It is a narrative of the events, thoughts and feelings experienced by the student while following this course. This narrative is based on the field notes recorded while observing the face-to-face sessions of the class and on the transcripts and field notes taken during the interviews with the student. I have documented the evidentiary basis for the narrative in footnotes so that the reader may determine more easily the connection between the actual evidence and the constructed narrative.

The interview protocol followed in this interview was similar to that used with Judy the teacher. A set of semi-structured questions were developed for the first interview based on the literature following especially Mann et al. (1974). Questions used in subsequent interviews were based on issues observed by me in the classroom and online.

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\(^1\) Peer editing mentioned in 3rd teacher’s interview, lines 704-714; online problem solving, lines 655-656; the need for more group work at line 646.

\(^2\) The teacher described her work habits during the 3rd teacher’s interview, lines 619 - 626.
The First Day of Class: the Student’s Initial Expectations and Reaction to the Course

It was the first day of class and Brianna stood at the doorway chewing slowly on a piece of pizza looking for her friends.¹ “What a drab room,” she thought. It was institutional grey with no windows. All unrelenting concrete, even the chairs were regimented in neat little semi-circles stuck to the floor.² This was where she would spend two hours of each Friday afternoon for the next four months.

There were her friends Carol and Joanne in the second row.³ She went to sit down with them. The pizza tasted like cardboard and she regretted buying it now, perhaps she was too nervous to enjoy it. Sliding into her seat, she put the pizza down and said, “Hey Jo, Hey Carol. How was your Christmas?”

“It was okay, how about yours?”

“Nothing special, but it was nice to be out of school for a while. Do any of you know about this course? I cannot find anything up on the Web. I do hope it’s not another grammar course like last term.”⁴

Jo turned to answer her just when Judy, the teacher, entered the room. “Good afternoon everyone, I hope that you’ve all had a good vacation and are eager to start the new term.” The lights dimmed as the data projector started to hum and an image appeared on the

¹ Many students brought their lunch to class, field notes 1st class, line 13.

² The student’s dislike of the room was noted in 3rd interview, lines 231-247.

³ Choice of seating, 1st interview, lines 95-103; 2nd interview, lines 339-346.

⁴ Attitude toward grammar classes, 3rd interview, lines 191-208.
screen. The course had begun and a two-hour lecture ensued.¹ Brianna sat in rapt attention focused on the teacher throughout the session.

The lights flickered on. It had been a long session and she was surprised that Judy had taught on the first day for the full two hours.

“What’s bothering you, asked Jo?”

“Nothing. It’s just that I don’t know how we are going to be evaluated in this class.”²

“Don’t you remember what Judy said? There are no exams or tests this term everything is classroom exercises and weekly assignments. It’ll be easy.”³

“Yeah, but what are the assignments and how are they going to be marked?”

“We don’t know yet until she posts the marking scheme on the Web. I don’t care so long as I don’t have to study for tests, especially grammar tests like last term.”⁴

“That’s a relief,” she said releasing a long breath. “It will be nice to learn something practical like how to write in a business situation. It’s so much more useful than having to memorize rules of grammar.”⁵ She picked up her stuff and made for the door. Just one more class and she would be finished for the week. She was tired physically, but knew that once she had adjusted to the new schedule her energy levels would improve. The key was to stay organized and not procrastinate. There was a lot to do each week. Work placement is on Mondays and Tuesdays. Classes are on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Then there

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¹ The teacher used a data projector to introduce new topics throughout the course, field notes 1st class, lines 24, 39, and 51.

² The lack of a course outline is noted in field notes 1st class, lines 26-34; student anxiety about unavailability of marking scheme shown in repeating questions, field notes 1st class, lines 99-130.

³ Perception that the course will be easy, 1st interview, lines 140-151; 2nd interview, lines 257-263.

⁴ Student’s relief on marking scheme not based on testing, 1st interview, lines 79-88, 168-176; 2nd interview, lines 288-292, 301-303.

⁵ Appreciation for the acquisition of practical skills, 2nd interview, lines 293-296; 3rd interview, line 203.
were the eight shifts at the grocery store to pay for it all.¹ She was happy that this course did not seem to demand a lot of effort. It was great that the course was a hybrid and she could do a lot of the work on her own. She felt more confident and relaxed than when she had come to class.² This was going to be a fun term.

*In the Library: the Social Context of Brianna’s Online Interaction*

Another Friday, just a couple more days and then she could sleep in a bit on Sunday morning. Gathering her gear, she rushed from the house. It had been a mistake this morning staying in bed and ignoring the alarm clock. She had promised to meet the girls in the library before going to class and now she was late.³

“Where have you been,” Jo asked as she slid into the chair beside her. “We were about to start on the prep for Judy’s class this afternoon.”

“Nowhere. I’m just running late.”

“Again,” Carol remarked sarcastically.

“Yeah again, did you look at the notes online? I do not know what the difference is between inductive, deductive, and expository writing. Too bad she did not give us some examples in the online notes instead of just talking about it.”⁴

“Well expository writing is descriptive, like telling a story. Inductive and deductive has something to do with how you make conclusions.” Carol paused, “I think, it’s something to do with logic, but what logic has got to do with English composition beats me.”

¹ The D.S.W. program integrates classroom instruction with work placement on a weekly basis. The majority of the College’s students hold part time jobs. Time pressure of student life, 1st email, lines 7-10.

² Feelings about the first class, 1st interview, lines 78-88.

³ Worked online at College with friends and not alone from home, 1st interview, lines 26-45; 2nd interview, lines 200-211; 3rd interview, lines 133-144.

⁴ Frustration over lack of instruction online, 1st interview, lines 111-112, 135-137.
“Maybe you could ask Judy in today’s class?”

“Maybe you could ask Judy yourself.”

“Yeah, I know. I should, but you do it instead.” She dropped her gaze and stared into her lap saying defensively, “I don’t like talking in class. You know I’m too shy.”

“Well whatever. Let us print out the stuff for today’s class and get started on the assignment or we will never be done in time. It’s almost noon.”

“Noon damn, I’ve got to go and see that teacher who is studying the course. He is interviewing me during lunchtime.”

“Is that the nerdy guy who spoke in the first class about some kind of research project?”

“Yep, I’m off or I’ll be late for him too.”

First Interview: A Typical Interaction between Brianna and the Researcher

As Brianna turned the corner, she saw him pacing in the corridor outside of his office. He looked up and down the hall scanning each face as they passed. Finally, he saw her. She could see him visibly relax.

“Hello. Did you think I wasn’t coming?”

“Oh no, it’s just that this office is hard to find. The room numbers are not sequential, but then again the buildings on the campus are not sequential either. Come on in and we can get started.”

The office was small and book-lined. He did say, after all, that he was a librarian and she could believe it by the number of books lying about the place. She took the only available

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1 Acknowledges her shyness, 1st interview, lines 105-106.

2 The actual class was held on Friday afternoons from 1 until 3 p.m.
seat tucked away in the corner. He began by repeating the same information that he had mentioned in class the day she volunteered to participate in the study.

“So, is it clear what your role is and how the process will work,” he asked?

“Yeah,” She crossed her arms over her chest and waited.¹

“Okay then, let’s begin. He droned on for a bit longer and then asked, “Can you describe your feelings on the first day of class?”

“Ok.” She was not sure what he wanted. “You mean what I felt about coming back to school or about going to the English class?”²

She heard him say, “Your reaction to both would be interesting, but my focus is upon the English class itself.” He kept talking for a bit, but her attention wandered around the room again. It was not very clear to her what was going on in the interview. “Weird,” she thought.

“So, Brianna can you think about something that you learned new since the course began and describe for me how you felt about it?”³

She avoided his gaze and looked over his shoulder thinking what to say. What had they learnt since the beginning of the term? He fidgeted impatiently waiting for her to respond. She looked up at the ceiling and re-crossed her arms.⁴

“It was something about how to write emails.”

“Okay and how did you feel about learning something new?”

“It was okay. Useful.”¹

¹ Observed body language, field notes, 2nd student interview, lines 7-24.

² The student often needed to have a question clarified, 1st interview, lines 10-22.

³ Often the student appeared confused about the question asked. In reading the transcript this appeared to be the result of a basic lack of clarity in the formation of the question itself rather than any lack of comprehension on the part of the student. 2nd interview, lines 64-85.

⁴ Observed body language, field notes 2nd student interview, lines 7-24.
She looked at her watch and thought, “We’ve been here for almost an hour. If this goes on for too much longer there wouldn’t be time to buy some lunch before class started.”

He had noticed her looking at the watch. “Okay, Brianna. I think it is time to go. I will see you in class. Thank you.”

“Thanks, bye.” Getting up to leave she thought, “Weird! What have I gotten myself into with this project?”

_Cancellation of Class: Immediate Prior Context before Decline in Student Attendance_

She started to make her way to class and met Jo walking with Carol. “Hi, where are you going? Class is this way.”

“No, it isn’t.” Carol said exasperated. “Didn’t you get the email? You would not, I suppose, since it was sent while you were at that interview. She has cancelled class... Again apparently, one of her daughters is sick with the flu. Young kids are such a cesspool of infection. Remember she had to cancel class just two weeks ago because one of them was ill.”

“That’s right,” I remember. “Well you don’t need to sound so annoyed. It’s not like it’s her fault or anything.”

“True. It is just that next week is reading week and there are no classes. I wanted to ask a question about the major assignment that is due when we get back.”

_First Class After Reading Week: Brianna’s Reliance on Friends and Psychological Distance from the Teacher; Her Awareness of a Decline in Student Attendance_

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1 This exchange is indicative of the sort of communication experienced in the actual interviews. The typical response was a single word of agreement followed by a minimal amount of explanation where the student was asked to elaborate, 1st interview, lines 40-50.

2 Classes were cancelled on Friday, 4th February and again on Friday 25th February due to illness in the teacher’s family. Students were notified by email and a message was posted in the announcement section of the course’s online course space.
It had rained during reading week and spoilt the skiing. Brianna was just as happy to have spent the time quietly. There had been plenty of work to keep her busy. It seemed all her teachers had assigned special projects for over the break. Why could not teachers talk to each other and schedule their assignments better so that there was not a mad scramble all at the same time? It had left her frazzled.¹

“If there are no more questions then that is all there is for today”, said Judy. “But before you go I’d like to hand back some of your assignments. In general these were well done. Your writing has improved since last term. I have included specific comments on your work in the annotated rubric found at the end of each assignment. If you’ve questions please speak to me.”²

Brianna walked back to her chair frowning as she read the teacher’s comments. Her friend Jo noticed, “How did you do?”

“Oh I did alright, not as well as I’d like to have done, but ok. I wish you people had been around last week. I could not figure out what she wanted for this assignment. It’s so frustrating to email and not get any response.”³

“I know, but Carol and I were away for the break. We did not get your email until late on Sunday. You could have waited.”

“I couldn’t wait any longer than I did. I went ahead with what I had or I would have missed the deadline. Hey, see here, where she writes that there is no verb agreement.”

Brianna shoved the paper under Carol’s nose, “What does that mean?”

“Well ask her?”

¹ Scheduling of assignments and student reaction, 2nd interview, lines 25-40.
² Description of feedback procedure observed in field notes, 6th field notes, lines 80-82.
³ Frustration over workload during reading week and reliance on email, 2nd interview, lines 317-325.
“Yes, I could. Judy’s nice, but I don’t want to look stupid.”

The three girls made their way out of class and into the hallway. They bumped into Keri, a classmate. “Oh sorry, haven’t seen you in a while. Where have you been?”

“Nowhere, I’ve just been too busy to come to class. There just are not enough hours to accomplish everything what with work placement, my other courses, the part time job, and my family obligations. You have to have priorities and for me the vocational courses are more important than learning about how to write business English.”

“How do you keep up?”

“I look online every week and do the assignments and required reading.”

“Really, you do? Maybe that is what many people are doing. I noticed that many people have been missing in class since the break.”

“Yes probably, you don’t have to come to class. It’s not obligatory.”

“I know. It is just that I paid tuition and feel I should come. I’ve not missed any classes except for two in all the courses since term began.”

Second Interview with Researcher: Brianna’s Reaction to Mid-Term.

He was standing in the hallway waiting for her, again. This was the last of the interviews and she wondered what would happen. Brianna had not made much sense out of the other interviews. She was puzzled if today’s session would put it all in perspective. The

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1 Reluctance of student to speak directly with teacher noted in 3rd interview, lines 80-112.
2 Pressures felt by student indicated in 1st email, lines 6-10; family obligations mentioned in 3rd email, lines 8-9.
3 Monitoring behavior indicated in course statistics generated by BLACKBOARD®.
4 Fall in attendance noticed by student in 3rd interview, line 37.
5 Student comments on her attendance in 2nd interview, line 77.
interviews had been uncomfortable or at least awkward. He seemed to be as nervous as she was and that was saying something.

She took her seat, crossed her arms and waited. “Before we start with the formal questions, why not tell me what’s been happening with you since we last chatted,” He said. “How’s your term been?”

“Good so far.” Her arms fell down and rested on the chair. “I survived mid-terms. There weren’t many exams just some quizzes and a lot of assignments.”

“You don’t like being tested?”

“No. I prefer assignments. Tests are too nerve-wracking for me.”

“Well I can understand that, but you are going have to learn to take a test. It’s a skill that can be learned like anything else.”¹

“Yes. I suppose.”

“Well let’s get started on the formal interview. My first question deals with your reaction to the course. It is almost finished now. What were your expectations and were they met in this course?”

“I didn’t know what to expect. I thought maybe it would be just another grammar class like last term, but it turned out to be how to write practical things like letters, résumés, and stuff.”

“Were you happy with the outcome of the course then?”

“Yes.”

“This course was delivered as a hybrid. Did that have any impact on your reaction to the course?”

“No. I think I would have been just as happy if it was in a classroom.”

¹ The reaction to mid-term, 2nd interview, lines 7-21.
“Let me rephrase my question. Would you have preferred a course entirely delivered in the classroom instead of partially online or are you neutral?”

“Umm, I’m sort of neutral. I do not feel that one or the other way would have helped me more. The computer was great and stuff but I think that if it were not a hybrid course it would have been much the same.”\(^1\)

“Okay. Here is another question about your reaction to the term itself. Some researchers think that students respond emotionally to events in the term. That is to say that their reactions go up and down in relation to what is happening. Did you experience something like this?”

“Uh, yeah I definitely experienced, like going up and down because of the midterms and what not, but I didn’t feel it for this course.”

“Why did you not?”

“The work was pretty steady although some of the assignments were bigger than others. The most important thing was that there were no tests.”\(^2\)

“Okay. That is useful information. My question now deals with your contact with the teacher. Can you describe what your contact with Judy was during the term?”

“Uh, I didn’t have too much. If there were problems like meeting deadlines and stuff like that, I could have emailed her. I felt like I could email for explanations, but I don’t think that I ever talked to her out of the classroom at all.”\(^3\)

“Well thanks for your time, Brianna. I think we should be going if we’re to get to the last class in time.”

\(^1\) Reaction to hybrid instruction, 3\(^{rd}\) interview, lines 209-216.
\(^2\) The student describes her reactions throughout the term, 3\(^{rd}\) interview, lines 271-294.
\(^3\) Student interaction with the teacher is described in 3\(^{rd}\) interview, lines 82-112.
Last Class: Brianna’s Reaction to Working in a Strange Group; Her Final Impressions

At last the final day of classes had come. Judy came into the room and said, “Good afternoon. Today we will do something a bit different. We will start immediately with a group exercise and then finish with a little bit of explanation. Please watch the following brief film clips and then discuss in-group what you have observed. I do not want you working with your friends for this activity. Instead, look at the board where I’ve written your name to find the assigned group.”¹

“Specific groups?” thought Brianna as she got up to join her group. “I don’t like this much.” She settled herself into the chair and calmed down. “It would be alright. She knew everyone in the class and they were okay.”²

“Glad that’s over,” said Carol. “I wonder what the point of assigned groups was.”

“Beats me,” Jo replied. “I wonder how much of this class we’ll remember in six months.”

“I don’t know. I seem to be able to remember stuff from the beginning of term better than the material taught after the break. There are things that I’m not going to remember but some stuff has stuck in my mind. Things like the different writing styles, formats, and that lesson on the different ways on how to write résumés come to mind.”³

The girls picked up their stuff and walked toward the door. The term was over. Now all they had to do was think about summer jobs.

Keri’s Story: Another Student’s Perspective

¹ 8th field notes, line 27.

² The student’s reaction to working in assigned groups, 3rd interview, lines 59-76.

³ The student’s recall of course content, 3rd interview, lines 258-268.
Keri’s story is a composite narrative like the others included here based upon the evidence collected during the study. The narrative is based on observations recorded from the face-to-face sessions, e-mail correspondence, and Keri’s activities online. None of the narrative is from interviews with her as she declined interviewing after initially agreeing to do so. She later chose to leave the study. I remind the reader that the footnotes reference the original evidence where appropriate.

First Day of Classes: Keri’s Independence as a Learner; Her Scheduling Demands

“Is anyone sitting here?” Keri asked as she sat down in the seat beside the two girls. They looked familiar to her but she could not quite remember their names. She started to unpack her bag placing her notebook and pen on the desk.

Looking up one of the girls said, “Nah, go ahead, take a seat.” She turned and resumed her chitchat with the girl next to her.

Keri looked at her watch impatiently wondering when the class would begin. She hoped that the teacher would not take the whole two-hour period for the first class of term. There were things for her to do at home before she had to pick up her son David from daycare.¹

“Good afternoon everyone, I hope that you’ve all had a good vacation and are eager to start the new term.” Keri listened to the teacher while mentally she made a list of chores to be finished before the end of the day. She looked up and realized that she had not been listening for a while.

“What did she say?”

¹ The student’s press for time is inferred from the 1st email, lines 7-10.
“We’re to work in groups and compose a memo based on the scenario that she’s distributing.” Each of the girls took the hand out and began to work in silence. Around them, other groups were chatting and asking questions as they worked.

Keri looked up from her page and saw that the other two girls were finished too. “Are you done?”

“Yes. What do we do next?”

“I think that we can go on break and wait for the rest of the class to finish.”

The First Interview Cancelled: Another Illustration of Keri’s Demanding Schedule

Keri peered at the screen. She stared at the email message while trying to remember the details. “Oh, yes. He’s the guy who wants to study the class for some sort of thesis work.” She read again, “Thank you for participating in this study on student reaction to hybrid learning. The purpose of this note is to begin the process. You had agreed to four interviews with me discussing your reactions to the course. The first of these should happen sometime soon so that I can record your initial reactions. Are you available next week anytime on Tuesday? The interview would take place in my office in building C, room 212C. It will take approximately one hour to complete. Could you let me know by email if this fits in with your schedule? Thanks again.”

She sighed with resignation. When she had agreed to participate in the study the other demands on her time were not apparent, but now it was obvious to her that there was little free time left. She wrote, “I can’t meet on Mondays or Tuesdays as I am at placement all day. If there is anytime on Wednesday after 4 p.m., Thursday between 12 and 2, and Fridays after

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1 Keri’s focus on the task is based on observations made in the field notes of the 2nd class, lines 47-55.

2 Text of the 1st email, lines 16-24.
5 p.m., I would be glad to meet with you. Please email me back to let me know when is good for you.”¹

Withdrawal from Interviews

He paced the corridor outside his office waiting for Keri. It was Wednesday afternoon and a little after 4 o’clock. “What’s got you so nervous?” asked Suzanne, one of his students from the first year class.

“Oh nothing, I’m waiting on a student who has agreed to participate in my study. I am just a little apprehensive about whether or not she is going to show up. The success of my study is dependent on the co-operation of the participants and that makes me jumpy.” He felt a bit self-conscious and went back to his office.

Sitting down at the computer, he opened his email and read, “Sorry about the short notice, I just received a phone call and I will be unable to attend our scheduled meeting today at 4 p.m. due to a family emergency. I think it may be best for me to withdraw from the study, as I have yet even to meet with you and we seem to have conflicting schedules. Anyhow, again I am very sorry about the short notice. I hope you won’t be waiting around for a long time before you get this email!”²

He stared at the screen with dismay. Just as he thought, Keri had withdrawn from the project. He wondered what that would mean about the viability of his study.

The Class after Reading Week

The class had just finished. Keri bumped into Brianna as she made her way into the hallway. “Oh sorry, haven’t seen you in a while,” Brianna said. “Where have you been?”

¹ Text of the 1st email, lines 7-10.
² Text of the 3rd email, lines 7-13.
“Nowhere, I have just been too busy to come to class. There just are not enough hours
to accomplish everything, what with work placement, my other courses, the part time job, and
my family obligations. You have to have priorities and for me the vocational courses are
more important than learning about how to write business English.”

“How do you keep up?”

“I look online every week and do the assignments and required reading.”¹ She stepped
past the girls in a hurry to get away.

_Keri’s Interaction with the Course Online_

It was 10 o’clock in the evening and David had gone down to sleep easily tonight.² She
would have some time now to catch up on her homework. Keri remembered something
about an assignment due in English that had to be done in-group. It was Wednesday and the
work was due on Friday. She thought the easiest thing to do was email and see if anyone
needed an extra member to help with the work.

She wrote, “Hello every one! I know this is last minute but I have been having
computer problems, this is the first time in a long time that I am able to send email! Yeah,
anyhow, as I was saying, I need a group to do the investigative report with! I know it is last
minute but I do not have anyone’s phone number to just call up and make plans! If anyone
needs an extra person in their group or needs a group see me tomorrow (Feb 10) or email me.
We can always do the assignment before class on Friday! Hope to hear from you soon!”³

_Mac’s Story_

¹ Keri’s monitoring online of the progress of the class is documented in the weekly activity statistics generated by
BLACKBOARD®.

² The time of Keri’s online studying is taken from the date and time of her 2nd email, Wed, 09 Feb, 2005,
22:26:11.

³ Text of the 2nd email, lines 6-14.
This is the story of my [Mac Nason’s] reflections while participating in the study. It is included in an attempt to provide another dimension to the perspectives of the other participants whose stories I have told here. I do not mean for my story to be a discussion of the various themes and ideas that emerged from the study. There is a separate discussion of such themes in the next chapter. The experience I gained while observing the online and face-to-face sessions of the class, as well as participating in the interviews form the basis for the recollections presented here. On occasion, the recollections are based on the evidence collected during the study; in these instances, footnotes have been included to direct the reader to the appropriate source.

First Day of Class: Soliciting Participation in the Study

Judy called upon me to introduce myself and explain my project to the class. I looked out on the room and became conscious that this was a room of strangers. I had no rapport with them. In a bit of a panic that surprised me, I started to ramble. Trying to organize myself, I remembered to stick to the prepared text submitted to the research committee. This was becoming quite awful really, just very stilted. Looking out at the group again, I saw that few if any of the students were listening. Most of them were in quiet conversation with their friends. This was becoming embarrassing. I finished my story and started to distribute the consent forms.

I sat down and waited as the class began. At the break, students walked by my seat and returned the consent forms. Two, just two students had agreed to volunteer! Ah dear, this was frustrating. I had hoped for five or six. Anxiously I thought, what would happen if neither of these students was particularly reflective in nature? Would I have anything to report?
I approached Judy at the end of the class, “Just wanted to thank you for letting me use part of your class to solicit participants.”

“That’s no problem. Did you have any luck?”

“Yep, not as much as I’d hoped but some of the students expressed an interest.”

“That’s good. I was afraid that no one would volunteer.”

Observing a Face-to-Face Class in Mid-Term

I took my seat early as in the past so that I could watch the class come together from the beginning. I vowed to be vigilant in observing the students. It had come as a shock to realize that in my previous observations the focus of my attention had been upon the teacher rather than the students. Jim, a colleague, had pointed it out to me in an offhand remark. He had asked me how my project was going and I’d told him all the things that I’d learned about teaching by watching an experienced teacher. It was then he had asked me about the reaction of the students and I’d realized my entire focus had been upon the teacher. Today would be different.

Judy started the class. As usual, she began with an overhead to introduce the subject and then moved onto a mini-lecture. My attention began to wander. I started and then realized that I had stopped listening. Ah, she is asking for questions. She must be at the end of the lecture and just about ready to start her summary. This meant usually that she would explain the group exercise and then break before the exercise had begun. I would have a chance to find some coffee and wake up.

I put the half-filled coffee on the desk and sat down. I reviewed the last hour and realized that my attention had wandered. Really, it was very annoying; even with a conscious decision at the beginning of the class I could not seem to focus that day.¹ I wondered if it was

¹ My lack of focus and inattention noted in 4th field notes of face-to-face session, lines 81-83.
because I was tired. This was a Friday afternoon class and I had taught in the morning besides which I had a late night the day before because of the College’s open house. Perhaps that explained my inattentiveness or perhaps I was just bored. That was it. I was tired, but also bored. I wondered what distractions the students faced in maintaining their attention.

*In the Cafeteria: Some Thoughts on Student Literacy*

It was Wednesday at eleven o’clock. There was just enough time to get to the cafeteria and find some coffee before seeing Judy for her next interview. I saw Guy sitting by himself over by the windows and joined him.

“How are things, Guy?”

“They’re fine, thanks.”

“Not by the expression on your face, they’re not. Why are you crying into your beer?”

“Nothing really, it’s just that I’ve finished testing the reading levels of this year’s incoming class and I’m tired.”

“What’s the verdict?”

“It is the same as always. The average reading level is a little less than grade twelve.”

“I’m surprised. There are so many students one encounters with very poor reading skills.”

“Ah, that’s because the College does not test all incoming students. There are some programs and, they may even be the majority now that do not test reading at all.”

I paused, thinking what impact poor reading skills would have on the acceptance of hybrid courses by students. It was a written medium after all. Surely, students who read well would have an advantage over those who did not. This would have a double effect in a course like the one of Judy. It was in some sense a remedial English course. Only students who had
not met the standard, i.e., grade 12 English, were required to take her course. The delivery mechanism stressed reading skills to a group of students weak in those same skills.

I remembered asking Brianna, did she like the course as a hybrid or would she have preferred a more traditional delivery in the classroom. She said, “Umm, I’m sort of neutral. I do not feel that like one or the other would have helped me more. Like the computer was great and stuff but I think that if it were not a hybrid course it would have been much the same.”

In the same conversation, Brianna had indicated to me that she thought the course important and preferred it to the one devoted to grammar. The grammar course had been a repeat of material she recalled from high school while this course was new in that it taught writing skills in a vocational context.

I left the cafeteria in a hurry on my way to Judy’s office. As I ran up the hall in order to get there on time, the different perspectives struck me. I viewed poor literacy skills as an indication of ability and prior preparation. Brianna was concerned with how an English course related to her choice of vocation. She can read and does not seem to care what mechanism the teacher used to deliver the course. It is her notion of importance that matters to her.

What was I to think? The poor reading skills I had observed in my own teaching were perhaps the result of a different attitude toward reading. I thought for my generation and me that there was a certain respect for the written word. It was possible perhaps that this generation did not share the same degree of respect for the printed page. It was not a question of ability, as I had thought, only a question of preference.

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1 Quotation from 3rd student interview, lines 215-216.

2 Summary of information from the 3rd student interview, lines 196-201.
Interview with Judy: Our Lack of Rapport

“Hey Judy, I’d like to start today’s interview with something that just occurred to me while in the cafeteria. Do you think problems students had in reading and writing might affect students’ reaction to the course? Is this not a medium that is inappropriate for them?”

“Absolutely, it is. Some of them still do have problems with reading and writing. Certainly losing that hour of face-to-face contact doesn’t do these particular students any favours.”¹

“Why is that do you suppose? I mean what accounts for their poor skills? Is it a matter of their prior academic preparation?”

“I cannot say why.”²

Judy and I chatted for a while more and then I turned the conversation toward the relationship between the online and classroom parts of the course. I asked, “What are your thoughts on how the various parts of the course online are being used by students?”

Judy turned her gaze away from me and looked toward the door. “For some students the online aspects are a reason for not coming to class.” Still avoiding eye contact with me, Judy continued, “They can find the class notes and instructions for the various assignments online.”³

“How does what happens online relate to the classroom sessions?”

Judy paused before answering and then said, “Well, except in a couple of instances the online material is used to avoid photocopying handouts for the class. They are intended for the students to print out and bring to the class.” She leaned back into her chair placing her

¹ Quotation from 1st teacher’s interview, lines 107-108.
² Teacher’s response from 2nd teacher’s interview, line 111.
³ 2nd teacher’s interview, lines 37-39.
arms behind her head. “Darn, I guess I’m being a bit flippant there. What I should have said was that most of what I posted consists of assignments and exercises to reinforce what students learnt in class. The couple of exceptions were readings that I wanted them to peruse before coming to class in order to prepare for new material.”¹

I thought about Judy’s body language and tone in response to my questions. Something bothered me. I had noticed in the past that our conversations were unusual in some way. I did not feel any particular rapport between us. The right word to describe the feeling escaped me. Flirtatious was not right, but neither was flippancy. It was just the conversation was more playful than serious in tone. I did not feel that Judy took my project seriously.

“Judy I noticed that in your body language you seem to be not at ease. Is this because the questions make you uncomfortable? On the other hand, are you self-conscious about my note taking and recording of the interview? Perhaps it is something as simple as not being comfortable with me.”²

Judy sat up in her chair and spoke directly to me. “That is interesting! I would say partially I am trying to give you the best answer I can, but also partly because for so many years student attendance and participation was often a sore point with me. It’s less so now, but this particular interview has me wrestling with that again, and darn it, I had rather liked being complacent about this!”³

My Reaction to Judy’s Hybrid Course

I sat at the desk reviewing my notes. The more I read the more uneasy I became. Something was amiss. What was it? Pausing in thought, I came to the realization that I had no

¹ 2nd teacher’s interview, lines 43-49.
² My reaction to Judy’s body language, 2nd teacher’s interview, lines 142-159.
³ Quotation from 2nd teacher’s interview, lines 45-49.
field notes for the online parts of the course. Why was this? There had been nothing for me to observe in terms of activity. Judy had used the software to document and communicate one way with her students. In fact, did she not say in one of her interviews that she thought of it as an electronic filing cabinet? Shuffling through the mess on my desk, I found where she had said just that. It was at that moment the fact hit me in an epiphany. This was not a hybrid course at all. I threw down my pen in disgust. Now what, I thought. I needed coffee and some conversation. Perhaps a bit of relaxation would put things in a better light.

I brought the coffee over to the table and sat down with Gail. “Here’s my problem. I’ve just spent the better part of four months following what was supposed to be a hybrid course only to realize now that it is anything but a hybrid.”

“Why do you say that, Mac?”

“Why because the teacher used the technology only to post notes and assignments. There was no online learning happening. It was as if she was writing memos to her students.”

“Ah, you mean that she didn’t use hybrid learning in the way you anticipated. Would that mean, by any chance that she didn’t use it the same way that you do?”

“I see what you mean. I do hate being so slow on the uptake. Exactly, that is my problem. She doesn’t use it the way in which I do.”

“ Doesn’t this suggest something else to you as well?”

I paused for a moment. “Ah, this is her version of a hybrid course and I’ve my own. Who is to say which is more valid than the other is? It’s a question of definition.”

“Hmm, I think so. As long as the College defines hybrid learning only in terms of the method of delivery then any model is valid.”

*Interview with Barb: My Frustrations*

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1 2nd teacher’s interview, lines 43-45.
I was off to see Barb. She had agreed to review some preliminary notes and I was eager to see what she had to say about my observations. There was no one in the office foyer and advancing further, I noticed that the lights in Barb’s cubicle were off. I thought to myself, she must have forgotten our meeting, again.

Back in my office, I typed an email to Barb rescheduling our meeting. Later that afternoon I received an apology and a suggestion to meet after five o’clock the next day. I thought to myself Barb is working far too hard. She is involved in so many committees and special activities in the College that it’s difficult ever to see her, even when a formal meeting is planned. She has kept far too busy.

Barb’s participation was probably the most frustrating aspect of my thesis work. Originally, I had wanted to use a peer within the College as a sort of sounding board for my own ideas and observations. The thesis committee had extended this role to include Barb as a full participant in the study. Her reactions to the evidence would become part of the evidentiary base. Unfortunately, I had not been able to communicate this role clearly to her and as result confusion reigned. Barb thought of herself in terms of an auditor rather than a participant. Finally, we had sorted out together what her role would be; now it was just a matter of finding the time to meet. There just never seemed to be an appropriate time during term when our schedules allowed for extended meetings. It was very frustrating.

Commentary

The encounter with Eric, Judy’s manager, highlights the conflict between the policy of the College and the teacher. Judy does not seem able to articulate the source of this difference beyond a general expression that online teaching would be detrimental to those students at a risk of failure. This opposition to teaching English online seems odd given the natural fit between a text-based delivery mode and a text-based discipline. Judy supports her
argument by reference to previous unfavourable reactions by students. College students possess the mechanics of reading, but teachers often thought of them as reluctant readers. The basis of Judy’s reaction is this perceived problem in reading comprehension. It may be something else, such as her perception that online learning limits the personal contact between teacher and student.

Judy’s prepping for the start of the new term shows the press of time faced by a teacher. Added to this pressure is the fact that the College IT support group used the brief down time between terms to mount a new version of the course management software. The reader should see in context Judy’s openness to the technology, her desire to use more features of the software with this general lack of time and the lack of coordination by the IT group with the needs of faculty. This conflux of competing factors results in Judy’s pragmatic decision to post the minimum requirement to the Internet shell for the course. In effect, the pressures of time and technology forced Judy to be less prepared than she might otherwise wish to be.

Judy’s first day shows that she has a vision of how the course should unfold. She stresses that it is a communication course rather than a grammar review. She wants to encourage communication between students. Interestingly, Judy did not support this vision by her use of the technology, which could be deployed to allow for collaborative learning between the students. There is some suggestion in the narrative for this dichotomy. She is not prepared as well as she might have been. For example, the evaluation scheme for the course was not ready for the first day of classes and although her classroom presentation was well organized, there was no comparable pattern discernable online. Finally, Judy’s teaching style in the classroom emphasized lecturing followed by group work and did not really support student discussion. Students talked amongst themselves during the exercise and a general
debriefing by Judy followed this. The focus of the face-to-face sessions was always teacher-oriented.

The interaction between Judy and me where she became conscious of her classroom method may have influenced her subsequent performance, by making her self-conscious in the face-to-face sessions. A similar discussion did not happen between us about the online part of the class. This may have resulted in her being less attentive to that part of the course. In any instance, I described what I saw and very little in fact happened online. My motivation was personal in that I was interested to see what I could learn from a more experienced teacher. There was no attempt to use the observations as an opportunity for professional development of the teacher and the degree to which this may have occurred was unintentional.

The first interview with Judy revealed her self-assessment of her own teaching. Judy pointed to many aims, yet she did not pursue any of these opportunities. How are we to explain Judy’s inability to act on these aims? It is possible that her commitment to these teaching ideals, such as constructivism and problem-based learning, is no more than tokenism. These ideas are currently in vogue and she may not authentically adhere to these positions. Token adherence is not necessarily the explanation, however. Another possibility exists. For example, when I asked Judy about learning theory and whether she thought her approach was cognitive or more behavioral in nature. She said her response was that her approach depended on the learning environment. In her opinion, she was cognitive in the classroom and more behavioral online. This distinction by Judy suggests that it is her belief that the environment influences the approach to learning theory; i.e., there is something inherent about teaching online that is more easily conducive to a behaviorist approach. Of course, the possibility remains that neither of these motives explains Judy’s behaviour. It may
simply be the result of a lack of time, opportunity, and exposure to new ideas. These limitations might lessen if there were increased support for the hybrid initiative within the College. I should make one other point. At least in part, there is a contrast between Judy’s perception of her course and mine based on the observations I made. When asked about the balance between the online and in class portions of the course, she responded that there was integration of the two portions. I do not think that this was the case or at the least our understanding of integration was not the same. The course I observed took place in the classroom and only secondary activities took place online such as assigned reading. The teacher used the online portion of the course really to manage what other teachers would have called homework in a traditional setting.

The first use of the online portion of the course beyond posting required reading and documenting assignments happened when there was unexpected illness in the teacher’s family. The teacher turned to the online aspect of the course in order to deliver her material. Her behaviour demonstrated two values of online learning that deal with the independence of time and place afforded by distance education. Unfortunately, the teacher did not recognize this opportunity. No other occasions occurred when online instruction came to the fore. In contrast, students did seem more aware of the potential. For example, the teacher broadcast the cancellation of the class through the course website and the teacher distributed instructions for the week’s lesson at short notice. This did not appear to cause confusion for the students. No student appeared in the classroom on either day of the cancellations. At the least, this shows that students were prepared, and possibly more so than the teacher, to work more extensively online. A case in point, the teacher distributed information about assignments online, but insisted that paper copies be submitted for evaluation rather than use the electronic drop box feature enabled by the software.
The cancellation of two classes and the poor attendance at the first class after the March break raises the issue of student commitment to the course. Students were opting out of attending class in favour of monitoring the progress of the course online. This is a situation enabled by the design strategy adopted by the teacher at the beginning of term. Her decision to put up the course readings and activities as the term developed did not allow her to take into consideration how to design a course from the outset that prohibited such behaviour by students. Indeed, the design of the course supported this behaviour further by the fact that the online portion only supported the activities conducted in class. Had the teacher designed each environment to be separate and equal then students would have had to attend both.

Students, according to Judy, responded better to this course than an earlier one taught by her on grammar because the course was set in a vocational context that allowed for more discussion and interaction. In her view, students liked discussion and exercises that were vocationally relevant; however, what I observed was something quite different. Students avoided the face-to-face sessions, where such discussion occurred and, instead, completed the assignments independently using the material posted to the website. Although it would have been possible online to support discussion, student interaction, and provide an authentic context for the learning activities used in the course, this was not what happened. The teacher expressed an interest in meeting these student needs, but did not follow through in the delivery in either the in-class or online portions of the course.

Judy’s reflection at the end of the course is revealing. She is aware of current trends in pedagogy, for example, her comments on the role of the teacher, yet she seems unable to implement these ideas. Her role in the classroom evolved from a didactic one to a more facilitative role, while online Judy remained throughout the term an instructivist. This difficulty in implementing new concepts was also apparent when Judy discussed the potential
development of the online portion of the course. For example, she spoke about introducing peer review and editing, as well as online discussion forums. She appears to know the technology, but is having difficulty in using the technology effectively. There is an apparent gap between the recognized possibility and realization. Judy recognized part of this gap while my observations of her course made it more obvious to me.

The interviews with Brianna and the observations of her in class showed that she was a shy young student who kept to herself and her own circle of friends. One of the claims of online learning is that the digital environment evens out the playing field between students and allows for participation from everyone. This is not what happened here. Indeed, the teacher’s use of the technology did not increase communication, and the social or psychological distance between teacher and the class remained remote. Brianna sought clarification and assistance only from her friends, not from her teacher, or other members of the class. This is a clear indication that no or little sense of community existed in the course.

Judy’s use of the technology emphasized its ability to lessen the restraints of place and time in education. For example, the cancellation of the class on two occasions and the notification of the change in schedule Judy made by email. The choice of email for this notification suggests that Judy anticipated an immediate parallel reading by students of her message, an indication that she was aware that students accepted the use of technology. Yet, Judy used the technology only to ease time constraints. Judy did not explore how to exploit the technology in order to increase intellectual interaction, greater communication, or a sense of community.

Brianna attended all the face-to-face sessions and logged onto the course website weekly. Her perfect attendance was not the norm for the class. Most students logged on weekly, but only 52% attended the face-to-face sessions regularly. In this regard, Brianna’s
perfect attendance was atypical of her classmates. The degree to which Brianna’s experience was typical or atypical of her classmates is important because of her expressed opinion about how satisfied she was with the course. In general, she was indifferent to the method of delivery and thought that the course would have been the same had it been taught only in the classroom.

Keri’s story is the antithesis of Brianna’s. Whereas Brianna conscientiously attended all the sessions of the course both online and face-to-face, Keri chose to follow the course online and avoided most of the face-to-face sessions. In this instance, Keri’s behaviour was typical of those students who monitored the course and limited their engagement with it. Unfortunately, Keri chose to withdraw from the interviews and I was not able to explore the context of her behaviour. There was only one clue to explain her attendance. Her stated reason for withdrawing from the study was the restraints on her time placed by work and family obligations.

I mean to give the reader some indication of my perspective through this reflection on my personal experience conducting the research presented here. My remarks comment on three aspects of the research. These are reflections on the research process itself, my perception of College students, and my thoughts on the teacher’s performance. I found the research process frustrating because of difficulties encountered in attracting participants, as well as the mechanics involved in recording and transcribing the interviews. The basis of my perception of College students was, rightly or wrongly, on a notion that they were reluctant to engage in an intellectual activity. This too was another source of frustration. It is important, I think, to acknowledge my disappointment with the observed class. My unarticulated expectation was that the teacher’s course would correspond more closely with my own notions of a hybrid and, of course, this was not the case. On second thought, this was not a
reasonable expectation, as the College had not defined the concept of hybrid delivery, and, therefore, one teacher’s expression of the approach was as valid as another teacher’s was in relation to College policy. Again, this was a source of frustration. The research process in other settings had been a source of pleasure for me and I was unprepared for how frustrating I found this attempt at qualitative research.
CHAPTER VI.
DISCUSSION

The transition of the mode of course delivery from the traditional classroom to a hybrid format involving both classroom and online learning has been the focus of this study. The four commonplaces of the learning environment described by Schwab (1973): (a) the milieu, (b) the discipline, (c) the teacher, and (d) the student organize the interpretations of the research findings reached in this thesis. The discussion compares the findings of this research, wherever possible, with those of the existing research in the field of education. In addition, the discussion compares the teacher’s realization of the observed hybrid course to the requirements set out in institutional policy, the claims made about the benefits of hybrid teaching and learning, and the varying ideals or images of what constitutes a hybrid course espoused by the teacher, by the instructional support person Barb, and by myself.

The Milieu

*The Implementation of the Hybrid Model at the College*

Arbaugh and Benbunan-Fich (2005) provide a broad survey of the research that deals with the identification of those institutional characteristics necessary for a successful implementation of online education (pp. 133-136). Three major criteria are required for a successful implementation: (a) adequate infrastructure, (b) professional development in online teaching for faculty, and (c) supportive and motivating policies. The implementation of the hybrid model within the College has met one of the three criteria necessary for success identified by Arbaugh and Benbunan-Fich. The senior management of the College has made the necessary financial commitment to ensure that an adequate infrastructure for technology is in place and maintained through the creation of the Online Learning Centre. The Learning and Teaching Services Division provides professional development in the technical details of
online teaching for all members of the faculty. Subsequently in later years of the implementation, some professional development has gone beyond technical details to address issues of teaching and learning online. The case study examined here suggests that there was a lack of leadership in the area of policy and professional development evident in the implementation of online learning.

Judy developed her hybrid course in compliance with the requirements set out by the policy of the College. The existing policy required only that the teacher post the course outline on the course Web site, post an introductory message explaining to students how the course worked, and that instruction involved both online and in-class activities. For the most part, Judy met these expectations with the exception about an introductory message that she did not post. This compliance with existing policy did not assist Judy in using information technology to mediate improvement in teaching and learning. It is important to remember that the design of the hybrid course was essentially the same as that of the original course taught within the classroom. That is to say, Judy did the same thing, but in a different place. For example, the interactive teaching occurred in the classroom while passive activities such as assigned readings happened in the online portion of the course. The existing policy did not help Judy to make this transition in her teaching.

Policy concerns are one of the three criteria identified by Arbaugh and Benbunan-Fich (2005) as necessary for the successful implementation of online education. Their work focused on a number of policy issues none of which touched upon how to define hybrid teaching and learning. The policy issues examined by Arbaugh and Benbunan-Fich deal with the question of workload and compensation for faculty, the intellectual property rights of the faculty member versus the institution, and modification of degree policies, in particular residency requirements. Some of these concerns such as workload and compensation, as well
as intellectual property rights are present at the College and, indeed, were matters involved in
the general faculty strike in the spring of 2006. The senior managers of the College are not
free to act independently on such issues as their actions might influence future negotiations
that would implicate all of the Community Colleges of Ontario. However, a policy statement
defining hybrid teaching and learning is not an issue involving labour relations. The senior
management of the College could assert some academic leadership by defining hybrid
learning.

There is an apparent ambiguity in the implementation of hybrid courses at the College
cased by a lack of an integrated policy that would unify technology, pedagogy, and
management concerns. This is evident no more clearly than in the lack of an authorized
definition of what constitutes a hybrid course. The lack of a definition is a key problem in the
implementation of hybrid learning in the College. There is no College directive defining the
hybrid course. Mode of delivery rather than pedagogical considerations forms the basis
within the community for a common understanding of the term. Here at the College any
course is considered a hybrid one if it involves one hour of instruction online and two hours
of instruction in the classroom or laboratory. The ambiguity deepens because one hour of
instruction online is itself not defined and is much harder for the teacher to interpret since the
teaching environment is new and unfamiliar than say one hour of classroom instruction. The
only further direction provided by senior management is that twenty percent of the curriculum
in all programs is to be taught through hybrid courses within five years of the initiation of the
implementation. Senior managers have not attempted to address the pedagogical aspects of
implementing a hybrid course. As a result, the implementation is inconsistent throughout the
College from one program to another and between different faculty members themselves.
The development of a policy on hybrid learning is the responsibility of the Learning and Teaching Services Division, the unit tasked with the professional development of faculty in the College. However, even at the level of this Division the integration of technology and pedagogy seems imperfect because of the choice of strategy used in implementation. The emphasis was on the development of technical competence skills in using the new technology rather than on how to assist faculty in deploying the new technology for specific pedagogical purposes. Indeed, the professional development training offered does assume that the experienced teacher is aware of the Ministry’s requirement that Community Colleges employ a teaching model that is outcomes-based and with an emphasis on collaborative learning techniques. Therefore, the implementation strategy adopted stresses supporting the individual rather than prescribing professional performance standards for the teacher. The development of any one course is the responsibility of the faculty member involved and the evaluation of the resulting course is the responsibility of the respective College manager. In practice, this strategy cannot ensure the consistent application of hybrid courses throughout the College.

Much of the initial groundwork required for the successful adoption of online teaching and learning at the College is in place. For example, the required infrastructure and some professional development exist. What is lacking in order to ensure success is an integrated policy that combines technology, pedagogy, and management concerns. At the root of such a policy is the need to define in pedagogical terms what is meant by a hybrid course. A broad range of possibilities exists for such a policy statement. At one end of the spectrum, it may mean only a change in delivery from the classroom to an online environment where the teacher does the same thing only in a different location. It may mean at the other end of the spectrum, however, the adoption of information technology to change or to enhance teaching and learning. For example, the policy could encourage the use of the technology to
increase flexibility, to increase the authentic context and activities of learning, to improve student literacy, to enhance collaboration, and to foster better teacher-student communication. In addition, the creation of evaluation standards would make possible some consistency in the implementation of online education throughout the College.

Comments on the Course Design

Course design is an issue found throughout the practitioners’ literature, but if the state-of-the-art review edited by Hiltz and Goldman (2005) is any indicator, not well represented in formal research. Why this should be so is puzzling, but may be explicable, perhaps, by the fact that the practitioner’s focus is on practical matters rather than theoretical concerns. For example, the existing literature stresses the impact of such things as good navigation (layout and presentation), organization of material, and clear communication, all practical matters. In any case, it would be helpful to any teacher to have at his or her disposal a “typology” of hybrid designs. This typology would illustrate how effective design can implement a variety of pedagogical purposes. This typology does not seem to be available in the current literature.

Navigation, that is to say the layout and arrangement of the website from the perspective of word processing is the same from one course to another by virtue of the course management software implemented at the College. There are limited choices available to a teacher that can help to personalize a hybrid course, but these choices, e.g., choice of colour and font sizes, do not detract from the similarity apparent to the student from one course to another. In the case of the examined course, all of the features of the software were visible to the student, but the teacher did not use them all. For example, students could see the online grade book feature, but no information was visible. No feedback from the two student participants indicated that this had been a problem.
The teacher took the decision to reveal the course content progressively over the term. This meant that Judy built the course from week to week. The organization of the online material was emergent. Over time, an organizational structure emerged from the posted material, a structure not apparent initially. The posted files by the teacher had no instructions and it was only later that weekly labels were added to organize them. Again, there was a general lack of instruction about how to find and use the material, as there was no initial announcement explaining the logistics of the online course. The fact that the teacher made no mention of the material available online, during any of the face-to-face sessions, deepened this lack of organization. Interestingly, this lack of organization seemed to have had no effect on the students. Brianna did not mention the lack of organization during her interviews. Even when I asked Brianna directly about the organization of course materials, she claimed to have had no difficulty with the organization of the online material. Indeed, in the face-to-face sessions, Judy was not asked by any student to clarify the material found online.

The balance between the online and face-to-face portions of the course was unequal. The emphasis in this course was upon the face-to-face sessions and the online activity was secondary consisting only of going to the web in order to pick up the course materials. Barb, in her assessment of the course, noted that the online portion fully supported the activities completed in the face-to-face sessions and that these online activities were legitimate and valuable parts of the total course. As designed, the assigned online readings prepared students for the mini-lecture and the group exercise conducted in the face-to-face sessions. I agree with Barb that this was the design, but in execution, something else happened. Remember that the online portion of the course was supposed to replace an hour of instruction in the classroom, against the instructor’s wishes. In reality, the assigned readings were at best superficial and not an adequate substitute for the missing instructional time. For an example
of the superficial nature of the assigned readings, see appendix 8. These two documents were the only assigned reading for week 7 of the course. Not only were the online activities superficial, but also the assigned tasks were always the same. The teacher used the online portion of the course to assign required readings. There was no attempt to include different tasks. The online tasks used in the course were limited and repetitive in nature. In addition, the online portion of the course stressed individual learning over collaborative learning. This emphasis runs counter to the claims of Judy about her desired teaching approach, as well as the aims of the College. Students were assigned required reading, an individual learning task, but the course structure did not require students to use this reading as the basis for any further learning activity such as group discussion. The marking scheme used in this course reflects the unequal balance between the online and in-class portions of the course. If one takes the point of view that marks assigned to a task influence the behaviour of students then it is of some importance to note that none of the online activities included in the course were marked. It seems to me that there is a lot of truth to the teacher’s comment when asked how she used the online portion of the course. She admitted that the course management software was a filing cabinet used to avoid making photocopies, yet she did not pursue even this use by enabling students to submit their work online instead, students were required to submit paper copies.

Judy used the online portion of the course to accomplish two tasks. Students completed assigned readings electronically distributed rather than by using photocopies. The other task was as a means to disseminate the weekly assignments. These tasks are the same as those that a teacher gives students as out-of-classroom activities in a traditional classroom setting. It is quite familiar to hear a teacher ask students to read a chapter of the textbook before the next class. In essence, therefore, the teacher in this case is doing the same thing
except using the online environment to accomplish the same purpose. She used the online portion of the hybrid course to manage homework. Judy did not use the technology as a means to improve her teaching or the learning of her students.

_The Discipline_

_Adapting Online Learning to the Nature of the Subject Taught_

Some of the findings reported in the narratives relate to how Judy adapted online learning to the nature of the discipline she taught, English. Recall her conversation with Eric the manager at the beginning of term where she stated that a hybrid course was a disservice to weak students because that mode of delivery deprived those students of an hour’s instruction face-to-face with her. Recall in the initial interview with Judy, the importance she placed upon the use of vocational scenarios as a means to engage the students. To do otherwise, she felt, students would feel the course was non-vocational and irrelevant to their career goals. Again, recall in the narrative about the first class of term where Judy emphasized that this course was not about rules of grammar, but was about developing effective communication skills and would focus on discussion. These attitudes taken from the findings, raise the question how does the nature of the content impact online learning? The work of Biglan (1973) classified disciplines according to certain basic characteristics positing that these characteristics would require specific teaching methods. In a related field of study, Shulman (1987) found the teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge determined the teaching methods and the strategies used in a specific situation. Neither Biglan nor Shulman were referring specifically to online learning, but were dealing with learning in general. Arbaugh and Benbunan-Fich (2005) outline current research on the relationship between online teaching and the discipline (pp. 131-133). These studies focused primarily on the use of online teaching in information technology courses, but studies on disciplines from the social
sciences, the sciences, as well as some of the professional fields exist, as well. Unfortunately, the impact of online learning in the humanities has received little attention. All of the existing studies are from the perspective of the applicability of online learning to a specific discipline rather than the possible demands upon how to implement the technology imposed by one discipline compared to another.

The nature of the subject content of this course seems to have had an impact. Judy’s course was English. The suitability of an online or hybrid environment for an English course is questionable in Judy’s mind. Recall her hesitancy in applying the hybrid format to this course because it would be a disservice to weak students. She believed that those students would miss the benefit of more instruction in the classroom. This is a restricted view of the Web that focuses on it as a print medium rather than as a multi-media technology. For example, the use of short videos online could be an alternative to the vocational scenarios given in the face-to-face sessions. The requirement for good reading skills appears to Judy to be contrary in some degree at least to the skill set of the students within the course. Some accommodation by Judy of the poor reading skills of the students was evident. None of the assigned readings were lengthy or complex in nature. She did not, however, attempt to develop improved reading skills by requiring the students to outline the material, make notes, or to produce concept maps. The course is in some sense a remedial one intended for students with a poor or at least a limited academic background in English. This would seem to suggest that hybrid delivery is not appropriate uniformly throughout the curriculum and that teachers should proceed with caution to transfer existing courses into the new format. Nevertheless, if the measure of success for a hybrid course is the rate of completion then this minimal level of instruction online was sufficient.
Shulman’s notion about the teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge does seem to be a factor in this situation. Judy’s perception about the teaching of English to vocational students has been a determining factor in the way in which this course was developed and taught. She believed that vocational students placed little value on the study of English because the subject did not relate directly to their vocational choice. Vocational students lacked intrinsic motivation in such circumstances and so Judy constructed an assessment scheme that rewarded compliance with the earning of marks. There was no use of examinations or tests. Instead, the assessment was just a set of small weekly exercises that allowed the students to earn their credit. Arguably, the choice of assessment may be appropriate given the vocational orientation of the course. Perhaps the most telling impact of the teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge on the course was the choice of task orientation used in each of the group exercises and weekly assignments. The tasks were set in a vocational context rather than an academic one. For example, rather than teach students good written expression from the perspective of English grammar and syntax, these objectives were realized indirectly through the composition of business correspondence that the student was likely to meet in the workplace on graduation.

Judy’s pedagogical content knowledge did shape her course design. However, the teacher did not solicit student feedback to confirm her assumptions about student attitudes toward the study of English. Judy’s assumption is consistent with Brianna’s positive reaction to the vocational nature of the exercises and assignments. However, student appreciation of the vocational context of the course does not confirm nor deny Judy’s other assumption about vocational students not valuing her course because English did not form a part of the core vocational curriculum. Student feedback would have helped Judy confirm her assumptions.
The Teacher

The Teacher’s Role

Swan and Shea (2005) have summarized the current research on the role of the teacher in an online environment. They see the role of the teacher in terms of teaching presence. Teaching presence is the teacher’s ability to project him- or her-self in the online environment. Teacher’s presence involves a set of activities around three issues (a) course design and organization, (b) facilitation of course interaction between student and student, as well as student and teacher, and (c) direct instruction. Swan and Shea go on to explain that these activities break into a number of distinct roles that are cognitive, affective, or managerial in nature. Interestingly, these three roles are the same regardless of the learning environment. What is different is the impact imposed by the online milieu. Teaching online requires a more complex cognitive role, finding new ways in which to express emotion, and a greater degree of attention to detail and structure than that found in other teaching environments such as the classroom.

There is very little to say of Judy’s presence online in the course examined here. She used the online aspect of the course in emergencies, but did not integrate the online component on a regular basis. The course design emphasized the face-to-face sessions and there was no attempt at providing a comparable focus on the online activities conducted in the course. This emphasis meant that the course design did not support a teaching presence online. Online interaction between either student and student or teacher and student did not occur. The online portion of the course managed the assigned readings and weekly assignments. The design of these activities created one-way communication between teacher and student rather than stimulating online communication between all participants. For
example, a possible alternative approach could have involved students reading the material and then discussing it within an online group. What direct instruction took place in the course did so within the mini-lectures presented in the face-to-face sessions. Again, the teacher avoided the exploration of direct instruction online. For example, one of the early subjects taught was the difference between inductive and deductive writing. Rather than give this material by means of a mini-lecture, the teacher could have designed an online activity to encourage active learning by the students. Examples of inductive and deductive writing could have been posted, students asked to read and analyze the differences between the two documents, and then brought together to discuss specific questions within an online group. The teacher appears not to have considered modifying her teaching strategies to incorporate the new hybrid nature of the learning environment. In essence, she appears to have limited the amount of revisions necessary to convert the course to the new hybrid format.

*The Teacher’s Professed Beliefs and Actions*

Speer (2005) summarizes the literature on the professed and attributed beliefs of a teacher. When a teacher’s actions do not match professed beliefs, the assumption is that the teacher does in fact not hold the professed belief. Attributed beliefs are those held unconsciously by teachers. The observation of the teacher’s actions reveals these beliefs. The literature notes that there is a disparity between what the teacher thinks he or she is doing in the classroom and what is occurring actually. In the example of the case study examined here, the disparity between the professed beliefs of Judy and her actions can best be seen in terms of her responses to the ten dimensions of effective online teaching developed by Reeves and Reeves (1995). When comparing these responses to the observed course, it is apparent that Judy’s beliefs and actions are unaligned; some examples will help illustrate the disparity in this case. One of the dimensions of good teaching noted by Reeves and Reeves (1995) is the
pedagogical approach of the teacher. Reeves and Reeves mean by this dimension where does the teacher place him- or her self on the instructivist / constructivist continuum. In our initial interview, Judy professed a constructivist viewpoint; however, observing her teaching of this course it would seem more accurate to describe her as instructivist in approach. The online portion of the course involved one-way communication from the teacher to the students. Similarly, the face-to-face sessions featured prominently a mini-lecture that again emphasized one-way communication that encouraged student dependency upon the teacher rather than more self-directed or independent learning that is associated with a constructivist approach.

Another dimension of good teaching related to pedagogical approach is the role of the teacher. Reeves and Reeves characterize this dimension in terms of the didactic / facilitator continuum. Here again, Judy professes to teach using a facilitator role yet her performance suggests a very traditional didactic teacher. For example, direct instruction was prominent in the face-to-face sessions. This direct instruction was always teacher-focused and none of the observed sessions were very student-focused. This focus was obvious in terms of the mini-lecture portion of each classroom session, but it was also apparent when the class worked within a group exercise. The teacher strove to keep the group on task and focused. Indeed, when using a group exercise to simulate a business meeting in order to meet the learning requirements related to verbal communication, the teacher assumed the role of chair at the meeting rather than rotating this function to different students. Her explanation for doing so was the problem of class size. It was not possible to rotate the role of chair to each student because of the number of students involved. This explanation may very well be Judy’s true motivation, but the end result was still an exercise that was teacher-focused. The face-to-face sessions reinforced this teacher-focus by the final activity of the day where the teacher provided general feedback on the previous week’s assignment.
There can be no more a revealing discrepancy between thought and action than the belief of Judy that this course was a “true” hybrid. It is true that in the face of a lack of corporate policy that would help define and describe a hybrid course each teacher is left to find an appropriate realization of the notion. However, I feel the flawed nature of this conversion would be evident to any impartial observer and it would be fair to say that this is not in fact a hybrid course. I view it as a traditional course taught within the classroom supported, marginally, by information technology. The course design of the hybrid was not rethought and revised. It appears that Judy converted directly the existing material to take advantage of electronic dissemination of the basic information provided in the course. This is consistent with the findings of the research by Cuban, Kirkpatrick and Peck (2001) who examined the adoption of information technology in the secondary school setting. They found that teachers tended to replicate their existing courses rather than revise and rethink course design to take advantage of the new potential of online learning.

The Impact of the Teacher’s Prior Experience

Some research indicates that a teacher’s prior experience with online teaching has a positive effect on student learning (Dziuban, Shea, & Arbaugh, 2005, p. 184). Yet, the linkage between a teacher’s prior experience and student learning does not seem apparent in the case of the course observed in this thesis. Judy was an experienced teacher in mid-career with a solid academic background in both her subject area and as a professional teacher. Early in her career with the College, her teaching abilities were recognized. The course followed was in its second iteration as a hybrid. This repetition suggests that technical difficulties encountered by Judy should have been minor and that she was in a position to begin experimenting with the features of the software. It appears that Judy was a well trained and
experienced teacher, familiar with the technology, yet the course did not engage the students, as will be discussed later below.

The impact of the teacher’s experience needs more close examination. Research on adult education (Cranton, 1992; Knowles, 1975) has shown that while adults are self-directed learners, frequently the determining factor in this regard is the degree of experience in the given situation. The same person, and this is true for both adult and other learners, may be a self-directed learner in one context, but a dependent one in another. If one applies this concept in the case of Judy, it would suggest that she was not a self-directed learner in this situation, as she had not explored in any depth the potential of teaching and learning online. The online environment was a context new to her and she required professional development support.

The professional development available from the College emphasized familiarity with the technology. For example, the guidelines for developing hybrid courses were in effect checklists of the features emanating from the software functionality enabled by the course management system and this was true of the early workshops available from the Learning and Teaching Services Division. The emphasis was on how to use the technology and not how to combine pedagogy with technology. It appears that technological competence alone is insufficient. “Past work has established that it is not the technology features alone that impact ALN [asynchronous learning networks] outcomes in a given context, but instead the mutual influence of technology features, pedagogy, and group processes” (Alavi & Dufner, 2005, p. 208). It would appear that even experienced teachers like Judy when confronted by a novel context, such as the introduction of educational technology, need to have their expertise in the classroom acknowledged while at the same time require encouragement to explore how to transfer this expertise into the online environment. Professional development is required in
order to help such teachers successfully combine pedagogical aims with the new technology, yet this need runs counter in some degree to the implementation strategy adopted by the Learning and Teaching Services Division. This implementation strategy left the pedagogical decisions in the hands of the individual teachers and their respective managers.

Factors beyond the teacher’s experience appear to be in play when trying to understand Judy’s situation. Goldman and Hiltz (2005) have stated, “The most important factor in the success of an online course is not the technology being used, but instead the effort, skill, and pedagogy of the instructor” (p. 266). The degree of effort mentioned by Goldman and Hiltz raises the issue of Judy’s motivation. Dziuban, Shea, and Arbaugh (2005) in their examination of faculty roles and satisfaction with online teaching identified four specific behaviours indicative of the teacher’s motivation. These roles were (a) faculty entrepreneurs, (b) faculty risk aversives, (c) faculty reward seekers, and (d) faculty reluctants. The entrepreneur is quick to assimilate the new technology and champion it. The aversive faculty member is hesitant to implement the technology. Those faculty motivated through rewards adopt the new technology only when it is of benefit to their career. Finally, the reluctant faculty member is committed to traditional classroom delivery and unconvinced of the benefits of online learning.

Judy was not an entrepreneur using the description developed by Dziuban, Shea and Arbaugh (2005). She had reservations about the appropriateness of a hybrid course when teaching English and voiced concern about the impact on weak students of the loss of one hour of classroom instruction. She did use the technology and, therefore, was not probably one of the reluctant teachers. It would seem likely without more information that the label that best describes her behaviour is that of faculty aversive.
The Student

Lack of Student Engagement in the Course

The students did not appear engaged in this course, as indicated by poor attendance in the face-to-face sessions. This statement needs some qualification. The possibility exists that the attendance in this course is no different from the attendance in other courses by the same group of students. Table 3 shows the rate of attendance at the face-to-face sessions. Table 4 showing the rate of attendance online was generated from statistics collected by the course management system. The average attendance at the face-to-face sessions was approximately 50% of the class. The attendance ranged from a high of 60% to a low of 40% throughout the term. In general, attendance was higher in the first half of the term before the reading week break. There was a spike in classroom attendance in the week of April 1 that corresponded with an in-class activity. Student participation in this activity was marked and contributed to the final course grade. There was little difference in the rate of participation online throughout the term. The average rate of participation, i.e., the number of logins, was 89% for the online portion of the course. Online participation ranged from 74% to 96%, but there is distortion in this range because of a one-time fall in the rate during the week of April 1 when more students attended the face-to-face class. Overall, the rate of online participation was essentially constant with some minor variation. More students participated online than in the face-to-face sessions. Again, it is important to remember that these statistics represent only the number of logins in a given period, that is to say, from one class to another, and not the pages viewed or the files downloaded which might indicate the complexity or depth of the activity online. This pattern of participation has some serious implications. For example, the teacher’s design emphasized the face-to-face sessions and relegated the online portion of the
course to a secondary position. This means that the absent students avoided for the most part receiving instruction in this course.

Another observed indicator of a lack of engagement by students occurred on those occasions when there was a minimal, or a total lack of, compliance with planned online learning activities. The planned learning activity for week 5 involved online group discussion and collaboration relating to the composition of progress and investigative reports. The teacher created separate working areas for each group using the discussion forum feature of the software. No student participated. Judy made one minimal effort to encourage online collaboration and when this failed took no notice. This lack of compliance may be the result of the fact that the teacher did not assign any marks to the activity. In addition, the teacher did not attempt to initiate the activity in class, so that there could be a natural progression to the online work. This is in contrast to the in-class learning activity, a simulation of a business meeting, held later in the term, where student participation was marked. In this instance, students participated at least by appearing, but the degree of compliance was only minimal at best. The teacher during our interview held after this session noted that the quality of the discussion was inferior to that experienced by her in the other sections of the same course. These other sections were also hybrids with one hour of instruction online and two hours in the classroom. She surmised that this difference might have resulted from the group dynamic of the section in that it might contain more reticent or shy individuals than was the case in the other sections. Had this activity been moved online instead of kept in the classroom this group dynamic might have been different since online work is thought to provide increased opportunities for shy students to become involved without the same level of exposure as that occurring in the classroom.
When I discussed during an interview the problem in attendance, the teacher admitted the question was a difficult one for her as she had struggled with it in the past, but that over time she had come to realize that attendance was the decision of the student and was not a poor reflection upon her teaching. Judy went on to explain that the decision of students not to attend an English course was understandable since vocational students placed no importance on course work not related directly to their choice of occupation. In the same interview, when questioned about whether or not the planned learning activities were successful in the course, the teacher indicated that she was pleased with the outcome. She did not recall during the conversation the lack of compliance encountered in the online discussion exercise. When asked about her dominant role as chair in the mock business meetings, Judy replied that if she did not take an active part in the conversation nothing would have happened. Her actions amounted to a tacit acknowledgement of the minimal degree of compliance that Judy encountered with the class. Judy appears to have been aware of the problem in the students’ lack of engagement.

Participation in online courses is problematic according to Oliver and Shaw (2003). “Despite the fact that students’ participation in asynchronous discussion is vital to maintaining interest, motivation and engagement in active learning, participation remains problematic. Consequently promoting discourse has become a major role of the e-moderator” (Oliver & Shaw, 2003 as quoted in Alavi and Dufner, 2005, p. 191). Such characteristics as good time management skills and being a self-directed learner may play a part in active participation in an online course. However, in this instance, the students were unlikely to be self-directed. This was a remedial English course. They were obliged to take the course because of limitations in their prior academic background. The course design, in any case, did
not utilize asynchronous communication in any significant way and as a result, the teacher played no role in promoting such discourse.

*Unintended Student Behaviours*

Students appeared to monitor the progress of the course through the material posted weekly online by the teacher. The usage statistics for the online portion of the course showed, on average, about 89% of the students checked into the course weekly (See Table 4). In contrast, participation in the face-to-face sessions averaged weekly about 50% of the enrolled students (See Table 3). The difference in participation levels suggests that most students monitored the course in order to decide whether to attend the face-to-face session or not. This behaviour did not affect the students’ ability to complete tasks in remedial English without receiving the in-class instruction that the teacher thought so important. The teacher posted notes and assignments weekly enabling a student to keep current with the course requirements without attending the classroom. Indeed, the increase observed in classroom attendance during week 13 when the planned learning activity was a mock business meeting supports this conclusion. Student participation in the learning activity was marked and there was, therefore, an increased number of students present for that session. The usage statistics would seem to support the observation that students in this course engaged in a monitoring behaviour.

The monitoring observed in this case is consistent with research on differences in learning behaviours among students. Entwistle and Tait (1995) describe three different learning behaviours exhibited by students that correspond to a student’s degree of commitment to the course. They label these differences as in-depth, superficial, and strategic learning behaviours. Students exhibiting an in-depth learning behaviour are committed to the course content while superficial and strategic learners are less so. The difference between the
superficial and strategic learners seems to be grades. Marks are the motivation for the strategic learner while the superficial learner is unaffected by them. Monitoring appears to be an example of strategic learning behaviour.

The two student participants, Keri and Brianna, exemplified different learning behaviours. Keri’s behaviour was consistent with what Entwistle and Tait (1995) have called strategic learning. She monitored the progress of the course online weekly, but was rarely in class after the first few weeks of term. Her commitment to the course appears minimal. The observed course was not a core vocational one and this seems to be the reason that Keri was less committed to it. She dismissed this course due to the pressures on her time from obligations to family and work. The hybrid delivery of the course permitted her to complete the requirement. How much in fact Keri learnt is an open question. These were the reasons cited in her emails to justify her withdrawal from the study and these reasons may explain as well her apparent lack of commitment to the course. Keri’s behaviour may be indicative of those students who engaged in monitoring the course.

However, the behaviour of Brianna is less consistent with the observations of Entwistle and Tait, as well as probably being less indicative of her fellow students. She had perfect attendance in both the online and face-to-face sessions. This would suggest, according to Entwistle and Tait, that her commitment to the course was high and that, therefore, she would probably exhibit characteristics of the in-depth learner. Yet Brianna does not appear to have been an in-depth learner in this instance. For example, in the interviews with Brianna she could not recall when asked what she had learned from the class since the previous interview. Furthermore, when prompted she could not remember the topics discussed in earlier classes. This behaviour seems much more consistent with what Entwistle and Tait call a superficial learner.
If Brianna is not an in-depth learner, and it is likely that this is the case, then the question remains how to explain Brianna’s perfect attendance. In the face-to-face sessions, Brianna often made quick side-glances at my seat in the class that suggests she was very self-conscious of my presence. During the interviews with her, she was quick to agree in an effort to please, and in our last interview, when asked about this; she did acknowledge this was the case. It is possible then, that Brianna’s perfect attendance was the result of her self-consciousness of my observations of her, or in other words, the act of observation changed her behaviour. Other possibilities exist to explain her behaviour as well. She may have a need to appear polite to those in authority, in this case the teacher, and thus had to attend the class or run the risk of offending Judy.

The teacher herself enabled the unintended monitoring behaviour exhibited by most of the students in this course, at least in some degree. The teacher’s choice of course design was the most compelling factor that enabled the students to monitor the course. The actions of the teacher reinforced this monitoring, as well. It seems evident on reflection that the students could have interpreted their actions as tacitly approved by the example set by Judy, the teacher in her readiness to cancel classes due to personal demands.

The design of this hybrid course subordinated the online portion as secondary in importance compared to the activities conducted in the classroom. In essence, the role of the online portion of the course was to document the face-to-face session through the dissemination of information. This gave those students who engaged in strategic learning behaviours the basic means to monitor the progress of the course. There was another feature of the course design that abetted in the aiding of this behaviour. The evaluation scheme assessed student progress on activity conducted out of the classroom by the student, for the most part. This activity was not done online except for receiving the assignment instructions.
The absence of in-class testing, or examinations, and the sole reliance on the completion of weekly assignments, meant that students could avoid class with impunity.

The course design gave students the means to monitor this course, but another factor appears involved in the decline in attendance, caused by the students’ monitoring behaviour, and that factor would seem to be the example set by the teacher. For example, no participation by any of the students occurred in an online discussion board planned for week five of the course. The teacher ignored this lack of compliance by students and never raised the issue with the class either online or in the subsequent face-to-face sessions. Students could have interpreted such behaviour as a lack of commitment by the teacher to the course and acted correspondingly. Indeed, the decline in student attendance at the face-to-face sessions began about this time in the course. A further action by the teacher may have reinforced this attitude. Due to illness in her family, the teacher cancelled two face-to-face classes. The last of these cancellations occurred immediately prior to the reading week break. In an attempt to keep the class current, the teacher posted online the learning activities planned for the missed sessions. Students could rationalize that the teacher herself used the online aspect of the course to avoid the classroom sessions. Attendance at the face-to-face sessions never recovered after the resumption of classes following the reading week break. Parenthetically, it would be interesting to know how the attendance pattern in this course compared with the same students’ attendance in other courses at the College, as well as in the senior years of high school.

*Brianna’s Social Needs as a Learner*

Learning is a social activity involving interaction between people (Dewey 1963; Vygotsky 1962). This interaction occurs between student and teacher, as well as between student and student. The importance of this social contact differs between individual students
dependent on their learning style (Schaller, Borun, Allison-Bunnell & Chambers, 2007). There is some indication in research (Arbaugh & Benbunan-Fich, 2005) that there is an increase in the frequency and quality of social interaction in hybrid courses compared to the classroom (p. 131). This claim by Arbaugh and Benbunan-Fich is not borne out in the course observed in this study. It is unknown how much the course observed here resembled those examined by Arbaugh and Benbunan-Fich. This fact limits the usefulness of this comparison. In many ways, however, it seems that the online portion of the observed course did not address Brianna’s social needs.

Although Brianna was not administered a learning style inventory, such as that of Kolb, as part of the research undertaken here, there were indications that suggest the social context of learning was very important to her. Remember that in the face-to-face sessions she always sat and worked with her own group of friends. Rather than work independently at home, Brianna arranged to meet with her friends at school in order to interact together with the online portion of the course. As well, recall that Brianna expressed some anxiety when her friends were not available through email to discuss schoolwork during the reading week when they were out of town vacationing. Particularly revealing in this regard was Brianna’s hesitancy to contact the teacher directly. She sought clarification of assignments only from her peers and never the teacher. Indeed, during the entire period of the semester, I never observed Brianna speaking with the teacher. Brianna seems to have a need for interaction with other students. This hybrid course led her to create a small closed circle of friends. If there had been effective communication online this might have led Brianna to expand her support network to include a wider set of her classmates from which to draw help.

The observed shyness of Brianna may account for some of the apparent psychological distance between teacher and student, but the course design did not assist in closing this gap. I
observed in the online sessions no immediacy behaviours by the teacher. Swan and Shea (2005) define such behavior in this way, “immediacy behaviors can be verbal (i.e., giving praise, soliciting viewpoints, using humor, offering self-disclosure), or nonverbal (i.e., physical proximity, touch, eye contact, facial expressions, gestures)” (p. 242).

Implementation of these verbal behaviours online includes such things as the use of announcements, surveys, and discussion boards, yet this was not the case in the observed course. Infrequently, announcements conveyed information about cancelled classes, but the teacher never used announcements as a means to encourage the class. The teacher did not use surveys to solicit student feedback on the course although the deployment of this feature of the software was easy. The one time the teacher tried to incorporate the use of a discussion board into the curriculum during week five it was not successful.

The work of Moreno, Mayer, Speres and Lester (2001) gives some indication of how to use non-verbal immediacy behaviours online. Their research found that students learned better online when a social agent was present to act as a guide or navigator. This social agency did not have to be human. Students responded equally well with a simulated agent. Think, for example, of the use of icons in the margins of textbooks found in such popular works as the “for dummies” series. The icons help the reader negotiate the information. The teacher can do something similar in an online course to provide a sense of immediacy. Again, I did not observe anything like this in the course.

*The Rhythm of the Semester*

At first glance, the observed hybrid course did not replicate the rhythm of the semester described in the work of Duffy and Jones (1995). Recall that their model involved an anticipatory period of enhanced excitement, at the beginning of a term, associated with the formation of the class and teacher, as a community of learners. The anxieties associated with
mid-term examinations challenge the positive environment created during this period. Once this hurdle has been past, the class settles down and becomes somewhat bored dealing with the course, as it has become a known entity. Duffy and Jones have dubbed this period of the term ‘the doldrums.’ Finally, at the close of term, another period of anxiety occurs, caused by the eminent loss of the class, which has come to coalesce as a community. I did not find this pattern in the observed class. On further consideration, however, it may be possible to apply the model of Duffy and Jones by broadening the time to include the course taught by the same instructor to the same class in the previous term. However, the problem with this extension is that the two courses, although both English courses, were significantly different.

The same teacher had taught the observed class of students in the fall term of 2004 another course in English grammar. It may be that the initial anticipatory period described by Duffy and Jones occurred at that time. Indeed, given the degree of familiarity and rapport observed in the face-to-face sessions, it seems possible that the class had coalesced already creating a group dynamic previously to the beginning of the term in which the observations were undertaken. The ability of students to respond to indirect cues by the teacher that flagged transitions in the face-to-face sessions is evidence of this familiarity. Even though the teacher did not distribute an agenda or give an outline of the session verbally, students appeared to be aware of the structure of the format used in each session by the teacher. For example, small talk in the classroom ceased once the teacher changed an overhead flagging the fact that a new idea was about to be discussed. This occurred each time the teacher used a new overhead even though the small print made the screen impossible to read. Another unconscious cue by the teacher picked up by the class was differences in the use of her verbal tone. When discussing new material during the mini-lecture the teacher was very animated and dynamic verbally and students responded by listening. However, the teacher often
summarized content at the end of a segment using a monotone voice. Students appear to have perceived this change of tone and their attention lessened as indicated by the increase in the small talk throughout the room. The lack of confrontation is a further indication of the rapport between students and teacher. On no occasion during the period of observation was the teacher challenged by any student and the overall tone of the observed sessions were good natured and respectful.

The teacher’s choice of evaluation tools in the observed course did not include testing, the use of mid-term examinations, or major assignments. Instead, the teacher monitored student progress, for the most part, through small weekly assignments. This decision appears to have removed any of the anxiety around the mid-term noted by Duffy and Jones. The interviews with Brianna bear out this conclusion. In each of the interviews, I asked her about her anxiety level and, in each case, she stated that things were fine, reiterating that there were no examinations in the course. If, Brianna’s behaviour is indicative of that of the other students in the course, and there do not appear to be any counter indications that this was not the case, then it seems likely that students overall felt little anxiety throughout the progress of the term.

Of any of the stages described by Duffy and Jones, the one most likely to fit the situation observed, is the period they call the doldrums. Observations such as the lack of student engagement and poor attendance might indicate that the class was in a rut. Duffy and Jones recommend that once a teacher has identified that the class is in the doldrums remedial action is required immediately. Their suggestion is that the teacher should make major changes in the classroom so that the students cannot predict how a session will unfold. Judy appeared to be aware of the situation and in our interviews stated that she would be introducing major changes in the last half of the term in order to stir up the class’s interest.
In execution, this shake up was less dramatic than intended. Judy made no change to the online portion of the class. In the face-to-face sessions, she changed the order of presentation, placing the group exercise before the mini-lecture and she introduced a different set of learning aids such as video clips. Nevertheless, these modifications were minor adjustments on a familiar pattern. The teacher-focused learning stayed in place and, as a result, student dependence on the teacher remained unchanged. Not much had changed really. The student engagement with the course lessened, if anything, as indicated by the decline in attendance at the face-to-face sessions during the second half of the term.

**Student Satisfaction**

A direct measure of student satisfaction is available from the evaluations conducted at the end of the semester in each of the courses taught in the College. However, these evaluations are not available for analysis since the evaluations are confidential between the teacher and the program manager. There are some indirect indications of student satisfaction with this course. In broad terms, some degree of student satisfaction is evident because no student withdrew from the course; as well, there was an absence of confrontation and a lack of complaints during the face-to-face sessions between student and teacher. This would suggest that students were reasonably satisfied with the course as presented in the sense that the course presented no significant challenge and, therefore, students had no reason to complain. The degree of satisfaction was probably low as the majority of students engaged in a monitoring behavior that resulted in poor attendance throughout the term and more specifically during the latter half of the semester. This lack of engagement would suggest that there was a corresponding low level of satisfaction bordering on complacency with the course itself.
This sense of complacency, or perhaps benign indifference, describes best the attitude of Brianna, the student participant with the perfect attendance record. During the final interview with her the question was posed, “Would you have preferred the course to have been taught only online, or only in the classroom?” to which she replied that it would have made no difference as the course would have been much the same. When asked what about the course she liked the best, Brianna replied the fact that there were no tests or examinations. Further questioning about the course content elicited the response that she liked the vocational setting of the exercises, i.e., how to write assessments and other business correspondence relating to social work.

It was not possible to query the attitude towards the course of Keri, the other student participant, as she had withdrawn from the study before the end of term. However, I would speculate that her attitude was not far from those ideas expressed by Brianna, but for different reasons. Her commitment to the course was minimal as indicated by her attendance. Yet she completed the course requirements and received the necessary credit. Minimal effort allowed her to complete the credit and, indeed, the course design enabled her to do so. A more demanding course would have resulted probably in increased dissatisfaction among students like Keri. This possible reaction to a more demanding course seems to be what Judy, the teacher, considered typical of student attitudes about studying English in a vocational institution. As indicated by Judy’s emphasis during the interviews with her that English was not part of the core vocational program and that students did not value the course for this reason.

Fredericksen, Pickett, Shea, Pelz and Swan (2000) have examined the issue of student satisfaction in online courses. Their work has found that the most important factor determining student satisfaction is the perception by students of adequate access to the
teacher. In addition, they identified a set of predictors of student characteristics that impact on the level of satisfaction experienced. These predictors were (a) gender, (b) age, and (c) motivation. It appears from their work that women are more likely to be satisfied with online learning than men are, that younger people are less satisfied than older students are, and that the decision to take an online course needs to be the choice of the student. The findings of Fredericksen, Pickett, Shea, Pelz and Swan may not be applicable in this case because their work analyzed online courses and this study examined a hybrid course. This distinction may account for the fact that there was little similarity found between the observed course studied here and their findings. Access to the teacher was not an issue in this instance, as the teacher was available weekly in the face-to-face sessions, she held weekly office hours, and used email. It is true, however, that the teacher was absent online maintaining little to no presence. All of the student participants were women and the one available participant did voice a degree of satisfaction. There were no older students in the class and so it is not possible to comment on this predictor.

There is a large difference between the observed course and the findings of Fredericksen, Pickett, Shea, Pelz and Swan (2000) when considering the issue of motivation. The observed course was not optional, but an obligatory part of the curriculum of the program. Furthermore, the course was available only as a hybrid. Yet Brianna claimed that she was indifferent to the choice of delivery and that she would have felt the same about the course whether or not it had been available solely online or only in the classroom. In general, she was satisfied with the course. Brianna’s attitude is contrary to the idea that student choice is an important predictor of satisfaction.
Summary

In this case, the teacher replicated her existing course by transferring the material to the new online environment without considering fully the potential impact on curriculum delivery. This approach is common among teachers according to the literature (Cuban, Kirkpatrick & Peck, 2001). A contributing factor to this teacher’s behaviour was her decision to build the course in an ad hoc manner from week to week rather than construct it prior to the beginning of term. This decision, although a valid approach because it will allow the teacher to modify the course as it develops in response to student reactions, was in this case unfortunate as the decision reinforced her lack of planning, or at least, lack of substantial adjustment to take advantage of the hybrid requirement.

The existing policy of the College did not provide enough support to the teacher. The policy of the College did not establish a definition for hybrid learning and did not provide direction about how to achieve this change beyond a mechanical transfer of some instruction to an online setting rather than solely in the classroom. The implementation strategy chosen by the Learning and Teaching Services Division exacerbated this lack of direction further. The decision taken was to introduce the new technology on a voluntary basis supported by professional development. The original professional development available focused upon the technology and its functionality. Gradually, these professional development opportunities changed to include pedagogical concerns as well as technology issues. Another decision by the Learning and Teaching Services Division was not to evaluate the courses created through this initiative. The evaluation of the courses remained the responsibility of individual program managers dispersed throughout the College. These managers had no special
knowledge of hybrid learning and no systematic evaluation occurred. This lack of evaluation in effect left open the loop in terms of the implementation of the initiative.

The comparison between the course examined here and the literature on hybrid learning provides some insight on the effective evaluation of hybrid courses. The students were not engaged in the observed course while the literature suggests that online learning can be engaging. The design of the observed course replicated the design of the traditional course. The teacher delivered the same course, but in a different environment. This meant that Judy did not implement the information technology to mediate improvements in learning and teaching. The first consideration deals with the organization of the material, what is commonly called navigation. The course website needs to be intuitive in order to minimize the intellectual effort needed by students to interact with the material. The student should not have to expend great effort in manipulating the site. Another consideration is the balance between the online and face-to-face sessions. These should be of equal importance and not subordinate one to another. The activities online should be meaningful and authentic. Because learning online can be an impersonal environment, it is essential that the design stress teacher presence in order to minimize the psychological distance between student and teacher caused by the technology. The learning activities chosen for the online sessions should stress active learning and help the student make links between him- or her-self and the teacher, with other students, as well as the course material. One final consideration is online communication. The design should incorporate the use of both asynchronous and synchronous communications. This is an effective way in which to foster the development of collaborative learning. These are some suggestions arising from the comparison of this course with the literature.

The literature on hybrid learning does not define the concept and no exemplars exist that describe successful courses delivered in this manner. The lack of a hybrid typology is
unfortunate as concrete examples would be of great benefit to practitioners faced with the challenge of converting existing courses to the new mixed environment. Such a typology is one of the potential benefits that might emanate from the evaluation process called for here. If the College were to institute a systematic evaluation of its hybrid courses it would be possible to identify those that were successful and to create a typology for hybrid designs based on this information.
CHAPTER VII.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to describe the transition of a course previously taught in a traditional face-to-face manner within the classroom to a hybrid mode of delivery involving both online and face-to-face teaching. There are implications to be drawn from this experience that relate to the assumptions about hybrid teaching made when the College first undertook the initiative. The teacher’s experience also affords lessons to other practitioners with lessons that may be of assistance when they face a similar situation involving the migration of an existing traditional course to a hybrid form of delivery. Similarly, other educational institutions considering the use of course management software may find this teacher’s experience helpful in achieving an effective implementation. These potentially useful lessons or conclusions are dependent upon the validity of the study and its design. I discuss the limitations of the study and the steps taken to alleviate them. Finally, there are some suggestions given that place this study in the context of current and future research.

Reflection on Some of the Initial Assumptions

Of the various assumptions made at the outset of the hybrid learning project undertaken by the College, the teacher’s experience described in this study has a bearing on at least two; those assumptions that deal with the idea of an enriched learning environment and the flexibility that technology gives the student in terms of access.

In the instance examined here the assumption that a hybrid course could create an enriched learning environment in comparison to a course either delivered solely online, or in the classroom, was not borne out. Improved communications between student and teacher was the basis upon which this assumption about the enriched learning environment rested. The assumption made was that electronic communication between student and teacher would be unimpeded by the peer-dynamic working in the classroom that, for at least some students,
inhibited students from dialogue with the teacher. This increased access to the teacher would enable the student to tailor his or her learning experience to meet individual needs. This is not what happened in Judy’s course. Brianna when questioned about her contact with the teacher acknowledged that she felt free to speak with the teacher, but had in fact not done so either in the classroom or electronically throughout the term. Interestingly, in discussing the stress that Brianna felt during the reading week her explanation for her feelings was the fact that her friends were out of town and unavailable to answer her emails about schoolwork. Therefore, the fact that electronic communication with the teacher was available to Brianna had no impact on her actual behaviour.

The behaviour of Judy as a teacher further reinforced Brianna’s natural tendency to avoid initiating dialogue with the teacher. Dziuban, Shea, and Arbaugh (2005) speak about the need for teacher presence, “successful ALN [Asynchronous Learning Network] instructors need to develop increased immediacy by reducing the social space in their classes, and … if instructors increased immediacy in the web-based environment, learning will be active and students engaged” (p. 179). There was little if any teacher online presence in the examined course as typified by Judy’s remark that she used BLACKBOARD® as a filing cabinet to avoid photocopying material for distribution to the class. There was no engagement online with the students. The usual pattern throughout the term was for the teacher to post files and for students to download these files for individual study prior to the session held in the classroom.

There were two notable exceptions in this pattern and those dealt with the in-class sessions missed by Judy because of family illness. The class reaction in these instances is instructive. Judy posted the weekly material to the course Web site. Announcements accompanied this material explaining the situation and the fact that instead of holding the classroom sessions students would complete the work independently. Attendance was not an issue in the first half of the semester, but became increasingly a problem during the second
part of the term. This lack of student engagement with the course became noticeable for the first time following the cancellation of those two classroom sessions. Students began to use the technology to monitor the progress of the course and altered their attendance patterns accordingly. This timing is suggestive that students reacted to the example established by the teacher in this instance. The teacher was a role model. If it were acceptable for the teacher to cancel classes and divert course work online then students were free to do so as well. It was as if the teacher’s example had given students permission not to come to class. Ironically, using information technology to achieve a result opposite to what Judy felt was important, in-class time with the students. This was accomplished by de-valuing the classroom sessions and making it obvious to students that they could monitor the course and complete the required assignments by just regularly visiting the course’s Web space.

The flexibility that technology provides the student in accessing education is more apparent than real in the case examined here. It is true that educational technology does not tie the individual student to a particular schedule or physical location in order to access the online portion of a hybrid course. The assumption is that this degree of freedom would enable students to accommodate the demands of work, family, and school more effectively than is the case in a traditionally delivered course. I did not observe this. Keri used the technology to monitor the course and avoid attending class. The technology assisted her in limiting her engagement in the course. Brianna’s experience was different, but also unexpected. She collaborated face-to-face with her friends when working with the online material. This meant that the group had to pre-arrange when to meet at the College, and it tied the location of the meeting to a place that supported laptop access to the College network, i.e., usually the Library or the Online Learning Centre. In this example, if anything, the use of technology increased the burden on Brianna to organize her personal schedule in order to participate in the course. This behaviour may be explicable in terms of Brianna’s social needs within a learning environment and, the fact that the course as designed did not address those needs, at
least in terms of the portion that was online. The use of collaborative learning online might have addressed Brianna’s social needs; for example, allowing students to complete or participate in online learning activities. The teacher could have created a communication area for each group within the shell to discuss the assignment. Finally, the assignment could have been peer reviewed in order to ensure that all students participated in the collaboration. This would have increased Brianna’s social network to include a broader spectrum of students within the class than just her friends. There is also a more practical explanation and that deals with the issue of connectivity. Students accessed the course management system from within the College network because of communication difficulties accessing the network from home.

Some Lessons for the Practitioner

The design of Judy’s hybrid course is a cautionary tale for other teachers to avoid replicating the old way of doing something in a new environment. The online portion of Judy’s course was secondary to the activities conducted in the classroom and, in effect, the online portion of the course was used only to manage homework. Nevertheless, Judy felt that what she developed was a hybrid course. Indeed, she believed her professional practice was in keeping with most of the ten dimensions of effective online learning developed by Reeves and Reeves (1997). The phenomenon described by Speer (2005) complicates further the situation faced by Judy where the gap between the professed beliefs and actions of a teacher, is not apparent to the individual. The tendency observed by Cuban, Kirkpatrick and Peck (2001) further compound this self-deception because when teachers implement technology they tend to replicate their style of teaching and the adoption of educational technology has no impact on transforming their pedagogy.

Educational technology sometimes can affect student behaviour in unintended ways. For example, I saw the technological support of unintended behaviour in Judy’s course where some students used the system to monitor activities in the course through out the term. This monitoring behaviour accompanied the poor attendance experienced in the last half of the
term. Teachers need to bear this in mind when designing an online or hybrid course. It is the difference between the teacher’s intent and the student’s actual use of the online material. The disparity between what the teacher planned and what actually occurred in the course suggests that the design should include elements of monitoring and feedback.

The College’s decision to implement hybrid courses solely in terms of a change in the mode of course delivery, i.e., courses would be three hours per week: one hour online and two hours in a classroom, was a source of concern for Judy. She interpreted this as a loss of instructional time for students at risk. This concern may well be a reflection of Judy’s perception of online teaching. The course design implemented by her did not in fact give equal importance to the activities conducted out of the classroom. Her concerns, however, may well have originated from another direction and that dealt with the suitability of certain subject matter for the online or hybrid environment. The practitioners’ literature and, to some degree the research literature, explores the characteristics of successful students in the new environment, but not much investigation appears to have been done in terms of the impact of subject content on the choice of whether or not to use educational technology. On the face of it, this seems a legitimate concern and one supported in the research literature. Schwab (1973) recognized the impact of the subject matter as one of the contributing factors in the learning environment. In the case of this study, the decision to use a hybrid mode of delivery was inappropriate, or at least made without appropriate support and planning. This course was an English course intended for students whose previous academic preparation in language skills was inadequate or at least incomplete. Improvement in reading comprehension is one of the learning outcomes of the course, yet the method of delivery assumed the student was able to read well since the online instruction was dependent on the printed word. This suggests that administrators need to take into consideration the nature of the subject matter of a course when making the decision about the appropriateness of using the hybrid model in any specific course or explore online techniques for content delivery and student engagement that do not
rely exclusively on text. The key to such a decision should be the best interest of the students concerned.

*Some Corporate Lessons*

The flawed implementation of the hybrid learning initiative is the major observation made in this study. There was no integration between the strategic objectives of senior management and the pedagogical aims of the Learning and Teaching Division tasked with rolling out the project. Senior management espoused the adoption of educational technology as a solution to the systemic problem around the lack of capital funding for additional space needed in the short term. Management viewed the course management system as a potentially cheaper form of program delivery than the construction of new buildings. Within the Learning and Teaching Division, instructional leaders saw the initiative as an opportunity to embed further pedagogical changes around experiential learning and results-based teaching in the faculty. The definition of what constituted a hybrid course illustrates most pointedly this difference in perspective. College policy viewed a hybrid course only in terms of the mode of delivery. Any course that included one hour of instruction online with two hours of instruction in the classroom was a hybrid course. The disconnection between the strategic and pedagogical direction of the College and the professional practice of the faculty further exacerbated this lack of integration of objectives. The management of change within a professional community such as teaching is difficult. The approach taken here was to emphasize personal responsibility and choice. The Learning and Teaching Division provided seminars and workshops to enable faculty to use the new technology effectively. The management of the College fostered this informative approach by encouraging individual faculty to participate through release time to develop hybrid courses and the provision of such “carrots” as priority access to laptops. Judy took advantage of these incentives. There has been an undue emphasis upon the adoption of educational technology without a similar emphasis upon the resulting quality of education because of this lack of integration.
The implementation of the initiative might have met with greater success if institutional policy had defined the term hybrid course in pedagogical terms rather than solely as a descriptor of a mode of delivery. Such an implementation needed to lay out the spectrum of possibilities for hybrid learning and teaching, including an approach to deciding which courses to modify and in what ways, including evaluation and instructor professional development. This action alone would not have been sufficient unless accompanied by strong pedagogical leadership within the senior management and, not as in the case examined here, where the operational level within the College championed the project. In this way, there might have been a greater emphasis upon the quality of education issues. Finally, the strategic direction set out by senior management needed to correspond with the individual work-plans and performance evaluation of faculty members in order to be successful. This is accepted good management practice. See, for example, the management textbook by Jones, George, Hill and Langton (2002) where the planning process is described (pp. 191-197). Some adjustments would have improved, as suggested here, the implementation of the hybrid learning initiative to ensure a greater attainment of conformity in terms of the quality of education within the College.

Brianna’s reaction to the hybrid course is something that senior management can take heart in, even though the implementation was perhaps less than perfect. She stated categorically that the mode of delivery did not have any impact upon her and that given her own preferences she would not have preferred the course delivered solely in the classroom. The decision to use educational technology to reduce the cost of program delivery, therefore, did not influence negatively student satisfaction in this instance anyway. Of course, there are some important caveats that are necessary to add to this conclusion. Brianna’s reaction may not be typical of her fellow students and the experience in this one course may not be typical of other courses throughout the College. Furthermore, her reaction is not based on a hybrid course that fits the ideal, a course that is highly engaging, constructivist and so forth.
However, there were no indications observed throughout the course to suggest that other students were not satisfied. It is always dangerous to argue from the negative, but one would expect some expression of discontent if there had been a general feeling of dissatisfaction. Brianna’s indifference to the mode of delivery may have resulted from the fact that this course was not a core vocational one, and thus she may have dismissed the course as less important to her. It is an open question if Brianna would be as blasé about the mode of delivery if the course involved had been a core vocational one. These quibbles are academic probably, as the project has been in place for over five years, and had there been a general level of discontent expressed throughout the College, senior management would have drawn into question the continued implementation of the initiative. Given this degree of acceptance for hybrid learning at the College, it is worth turning attention to the quality of the learning experience and its improvement.

**Limitations of the Study**

The nature of qualitative phenomenological inquiry limits the validity of the lessons suggested by this case study. It is not possible in qualitative studies to draw generalizations that have the strength of those derived from controlled experiments in the physical sciences. Results in the social sciences, whether quantitative or qualitative in nature, are conditional conclusions only, or that is to say; deal with what McMillan and Schumacher (2001) label as probabilistic knowledge (p.13). In addition to this limitation, the aim of phenomenological studies is to describe a lived experience. “Phenomenological analysis seeks to grasp and elucidate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or group of people” (Patton, 2002, p. 482). In other words, the researcher seeks to understand the phenomenon observed and the researcher conveys that understanding through detailed description of a specific instance rather than a broader analysis, as would be the case in a quantitative study with a large sample size. In this instance, the particular story described in this case study was set in a broader analysis of the literature. Nevertheless, the probabilistic
quality of this type of qualitative inquiry limits the objective validity of the lessons drawn in
this study. As well, the descriptive nature of phenomenological studies limits further the
validity of the results.

However, even in the face of these theoretical limitations, the reader can infer a
degree of validity by applying the logical rules of confirmation described in the chapter on
methodology. Rather than test the conclusions in terms of validity, reliability, and objectivity,
I suggest the more appropriate tests for a qualitative study would be credibility,
transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility deals with the accuracy of the
description provided by the researcher. I have not consciously misrepresented or exaggerated
the data described in this case study. Nor have I sought to deceive or mislead the reader. The
reader must determine the credibility of the study by looking for consistency and adequacy of
detail in the description.

The parameters of the research limit the transferability of the results obtained in this
case study. This is a single case study in a particular setting. The results of such a study by
itself are not applicable beyond these limitations of design. These limitations deal with the
scope and setting of the study itself. The scope of the study is very narrow. It is a single
course study and the conclusions reached may have no relevance except in terms of that one
course. Indeed, the experience of that one course may not be indicative of other courses
offered at the same time elsewhere in the College. Similarly, the setting of the study was a
community college in Ontario. It may be that conclusions reached from this setting are not
appropriate to other educational settings such as the secondary school system, or that the
conclusions can be applied to other jurisdictions within and outside of Canada. Furthermore,
the experience of a hybrid English course may not be the same as that encountered in a
vocational one. All of these factors dealing with setting and scope tend to limit the
conclusions reached to comparable situations with similar experience. However, these results
may be more generally applicable if confirmed in a meta-analysis of similar studies. The
imbalance represented in the collected data further limits the transferability of the results. The collected data was very rich in terms of perspectives of the teacher and instructional leader participants, but less so for the students participating in the study. I attempted to overcome this drawback by requesting feedback from all participants, but again I received only feedback from the teacher and instructional leader and not the students.

The reader may determine the dependability of the study by the degree to which the description accounts for conditions in the phenomenon. I addressed this issue in the study by triangulation of the data sources. These sources included personal observation of the face-to-face sessions, observation of the online activity in the course, interviews with the teacher, instructional leader, and student participants, as well as documentary evidence generated by the course itself, by corporate policy, and by the Learning and Teaching Services Division responsible for the implementation of the project. Furthermore, the evidence provided in this study represented different perspectives. The design of the study relied upon triangulation of various perspectives so that the reader viewed the data from the perspective of the teacher, the student participants, the curriculum leader, as well as the researcher himself. The picture that emerged from the study was not, therefore, solely from the viewpoint of the researcher. Indeed, I attempted to ensure that the findings and conclusions recorded here were a reflection of the common experience by soliciting feedback from each of the participants of the study. I received such feedback from the teacher and curriculum leader, but I did not receive any from the student participants although I asked the students to do so. I incorporated the feedback into the study itself.

The final logical rule of confirmation deals with the issue of confirmability of the results. The reader must determine if the data collected supports the general findings presented in the study. In addition to this basic test, there is the issue of bias by the researcher. Researcher bias is not a conscious act or otherwise it would be an instance of academic dishonesty. The problem is one of perspective. My perspective influences the
description, interpretation, and conclusions reached. As a result, the conclusions reached are a
reflection of personal strengths and weaknesses, as well as experience. Perhaps a more
experienced teacher would draw different conclusions from the same evidence. It is for this
reason that the chapter on methodology includes a lengthy personal description. This allows
the reader to make a judgment about whether or not researcher bias influenced an
interpretation or conclusion found in the study.

Current and Future Research

Practitioners’ literature dominates current research in online learning. There has been
an increasing interest in the subject by formal researchers since the turn of the century. Of
those formal examinations, most have been restricted to single course studies as in the case
pursued here. Arbaugh and Hiltz (2005), when reviewing the quantitative online education
research literature, have noted about such quantitative studies “historically, this stream of
research has been highly reliant on single-course studies. Although these studies have
provided some insights, the idiosyncratic characteristics of the single course setting make it
difficult to generalize these findings to other learning environments”(p. 81). The observation
would seem to hold true for qualitative studies as well. In general, the major limitation of the
findings suggested by this study is the fact that they emanate from a single course only. One
way to overcome this limitation is through meta-analysis of studies similar to the one
undertaken here. Future research would be required to investigate further some of the
suggestions advanced here.

The student participants in this study appeared to have been indifferent to the choice
of delivery mechanism. This indifference is an encouraging reaction for senior managers in
higher education because of the potential benefits that may accrue in terms of space and
building pressures. Before making any wholesale commitment to hybrid courses, senior
management should determine the effectiveness of such courses in their particular
institutional context. The effectiveness of hybrid courses has become a theme in current
research dealing with online learning (Fjermestad, Hiltz & Zhang, 2005). The preliminary results have been encouraging suggesting that the hybrid model combines the best of both traditional and purely online courses (Arbaugh & Benbunan-Fich, 2005). Arbaugh and Benbunan-Fich have called for more research that systematically compares the different modes of delivery (p. 131). There is a need for clarification in their proposal for future research. The existing literature examining online learning, whether hybrid or delivered solely online, tends to exclude from the comparison any course delivered using a hybrid model that does not also adopt a particular style of teaching. For example, the stated criteria used by Fjermestad, Hiltz, and Zhang (2005) for their evaluation excludes some online courses because “not all Web-based courses use learning networks; some just post lecture-type materials or exams for downloading, do not involve extensive interaction among students in a class, and therefore do not qualify as learning networks courses” (p. 40). It is possible, because of the material excluded, that the favourable results of their study stems not from the mode of delivery, but the style of teaching adopted. Indeed an observation of the study undertaken here is that teachers will replicate their existing style of teaching when using educational technology. Therefore, it would seem logical that education managers need to be conscious of the effects of the hybrid delivery model on all courses taught in this way regardless of the teaching style.

The issue of teaching style leads into another theme evident in the research literature. There have been attempts to determine what constitutes effective online teaching. The ten dimensions developed by Reeves and Reeves (1997), as well as the online interaction-learning model described by Benbunan-Fich, Hiltz, and Harasim (2005) are some examples of this attempt. The problem is trying to apply these models to a particular instance such as the course examined here. The teacher clearly identified with a number of the ten dimensions
of online learning by Reeves and Reeves, yet the teacher’s hybrid course did not reflect these pedagogical tenets. The difference between the teacher’s beliefs and the teacher’s practice is the crux of the matter. It would seem helpful if one were attempting to define good online teaching to try, instead of constructing abstract models, to examine actual hybrid courses, and attempt to classify the curriculum approaches evident in their design. This classification activity would produce a typology of hybrid models. In this way, the term hybrid course would gain some degree of precision in terms of pedagogical approach. As the situation stands now, it is a term that vaguely describes a method of delivery only.

Summary

This thesis has explored the transition of one specific community college course from the classroom to a hybrid or blended mode of delivery. In describing this transition, the focus was upon four secondary questions. These were: (1) to identify the institutional expectations faced by the teacher, (2) to describe the teacher’s attainment of those expectations, (3) to describe the experience of the students as the course progressed throughout the term, and (4) to compare the experience of the teacher and the students with the intentions expressed by corporate policy and the claims made in the literature about hybrid learning.

There were limited expectations placed on the teacher by the institution. Corporate policy emphasized the adoption of technology over the use of educational technology for pedagogical purposes; for example, the term hybrid learning was defined in terms of hours of delivery split between online and in the classroom sessions. The teacher met the stated corporate expectations, but did not achieve the unstated although implied expectations of the instructional leadership within the College. The instructional leaders implied expectations were that the move to a hybrid model would improve teaching. The
experience of the students in this course showed this not to be the case. The students used the technology to avoid engagement with the course. The mode of delivery had little impact on their attitude. The students were indifferent to both the mode of delivery and the course itself. The potential for an enriched learning experience, found in the literature, and championed by the instructional leadership of the College, did not materialized. In conclusion, this case study was an example of an institutional initiative involving the movement to hybrid courses that focused on the technology rather than the associated pedagogical issues. Essentially, in the case of the specific course examined here, no other change occurred other than the electronic delivery of material previously distributed on paper.
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APPENDIX 1

TEACHER LETTER OF INFORMATION

I am a faculty member in the Library and Information Technician Program at Algonquin College and I am currently completing an M.Ed. program at Queen’s University under the guidance of Dr. G. Roulet. I am writing to ask you to participate in research that I am conducting examining the milieu within the learning environment of a hybrid course as perceived by the student participants. The title of the study is: Factors Influencing the Comfort Level of Students in Hybrid Web Delivered Courses. Understanding student perceptions of the milieu within a hybrid course may prove to be useful for other teachers working in similar situations. The proposed research has been reviewed and approved by the General Research Ethics Board at Queen’s University and by the Research Ethics Board of Algonquin College.

The data collected in this study will be obtained through interviews with student participants, field observation of those students within the classroom, and document analysis of those students interaction online with you. As part of the study, you will be observed within the classroom by the researcher who will look specifically at your verbal and non-verbal interactions with the student participants. In addition, I will interview you to determine the design of the course and your curriculum outcomes at the beginning of the study. Prior to each of the three interviews with students I will interview you in order to determine from your perspective how the course is unfolding. This information will be used to formulate the questions used in the student interviews. All of our interviews will be audio-taped and field notes may be taken. No information obtained by me will be shared with you. No student reactions, attitudes, or opinions will be divulged by me in our interviews. You should know that in addition to interviewing you and the selected students the data will be shared with a peer responder who will be obliged to maintain confidentiality. This peer responder is included in the study as a means of validation of the study results and will ensure that any interpretation provided by the researcher takes into account perspectives other than his own as well as to ensure that such interpretation is reasonable.

Should you decide to participate, your involvement would include the following conditions:

I. You agree to allow me access to the weekly classroom session of your hybrid course;
II. You will enable my access to the online shell of the course;  You agree to participate in four individual interviews of one hour’s length each;
III. You may review the transcription of the tapes and my field notes of our interviews together for accuracy and matters of confidentiality;
IV. If I require clarification of information you agree to my contacting you by either phone or email;
V. You grant permission to quote your recorded interview statements using an assigned pseudonym to protect your identity both in the
thesis as well as any presentations or other academic papers published subsequently;

VI. You need not answer any question in the interviews that may be objectionable or uncomfortable for you;

VII. You may withdraw from the study at anytime without any consequences at all;

VIII. If you decide to withdraw you may request that your data be removed from the Study;

IX. There is no remuneration offered in exchange for your participation within this study.

If you choose to participate in this study please complete the attached consent form and return it to me. You may decide not to participate, or withdraw from the study once it has begun, without explaining your reasons, and without any consequences to yourself. If you have any questions about this research, you can reach me at home by phone at (613) 226-1600, at work at (613) 727-4723 extension 5066 or by email (nasonm@algonquincollege.com). You may, as well, contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Geoffrey Roulet by phone at (613) 533-6000 extension 74935 or by email at rouletg@educ.queensu.ca. If you have any questions, comments or complaints about the research ethics of this study please contact the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré at (613) 533-6210, or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson at (613) 533-6081, or the chair of the Research Ethics Board of Algonquin College, Ms. Barb Foulds at (613) 727-4723 extension 5428, or by email fouldsb@algonquincollege.com.

Yours sincerely,

Mac Nason
M.Ed. Candidate
Faculty of Education
Queen’s University, Kingston, Ont.
APPENDIX 2

FACULTY PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM

Faculty of Education
Queen’s University
Faculty Participant:

I, _______________________________, consent voluntarily to participate in the study Factors Influencing the Comfort Level of Students in Hybrid Web delivered Courses. The researcher in this study is Mac Nason, a candidate for the degree of M.Ed. at Queen’s University. The thesis supervisor is Dr. Geoffrey Roulet. I understand that the thesis explores student reactions to hybrid Web delivered courses.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to examine the milieu within the learning environment of a hybrid course as perceived by the student participants. Understanding student perceptions of the milieu within this hybrid course may prove to be useful for other teachers working in similar situations.

I understand that my participation involves four interviews of at least one hour in duration. In addition, I recognize that the researcher will observe me both in the classroom as well as within the online environment of the course. In each of these instances I have the right to review field notes and transcriptions in order to ensure accuracy and raise any concerns dealing with confidentiality. I understand that subsequent to the completion of the research all documentation will be retained in a controlled-access environment for further research and possible publication. I agree that the researcher may contact me directly in order to clarify information collected from the interviews and observations.

I understand that information obtained from this study is confidential and cannot be disclosed to a third party within the College or elsewhere.

I grant permission for the researcher to: (a) relate details of my interviews, (b) cite or quote my actions and words during the interviews or from classroom and online observations, (c) make reference to his own impressions of my reactions related to this study based on his field notes and conclusions. This permission extends to the preparation of the completed thesis and any presentations or future academic publications that might emanate from this research.

I understand that my identity will remain anonymous. All written reports generated from this project will protect my identity through the use of a pseudonym. I have been informed that this research follows the principles of confidentiality, anonymity, and other ethical guidelines as established by Queen’s University and Algonquin College.

I acknowledge that participation in this research is voluntary. I may withdraw without any consequences at anytime. No explanation for my withdrawal is required. I have the choice to leave my data within the study or remove any or all of my data.
All of my questions and concerns about this research have been answered by the researcher. I have been informed that further concerns can be dealt with at any time by contacting the researcher Mac Nason at (613) 226-1600, nasonm@algonquincollege.com, or by speaking to Dr. Geoffrey Roulet at (613) 533-6000 extension 74935, rouletg@edu.queensu.ca. Further questions, comments or complaints may be directed to the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré at (613) 533-6210, or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson at (613) 533-6081, or the chair of the Research Ethics Board of Algonquin College, Ms. Barb Foulds at (613) 727-4723 extension 5428, or by email foulsb@algonquincollege.com.

I have read and retained a signed copy of this consent form.
SIGNED: _________________________ DATE: _________________________
APPENDIX 3

STUDENT LETTER OF INFORMATION

I am a faculty member in the Library and Information Technician Program at Algonquin College and I am currently completing an M.Ed. program at Queen’s University under the guidance of Dr. G. Roulet. I am writing to ask you to participate in research that I am conducting examining the milieu within the learning environment of a hybrid course as perceived by the student participants. The title of the study is: Factors Influencing the Comfort Level of Students in Hybrid Web Delivered Courses. Understanding student perceptions of the milieu within a hybrid course may prove to be useful for other teachers working in similar situations. The proposed research has been reviewed and approved by the General Research Ethics Board at Queen’s University and by the Research Ethics Board of Algonquin College.

Your participation is on a voluntary basis only. If you agree and are chosen to become involved in the research we will meet three times throughout the course for an interview lasting approximately one hour. These meetings will be audio-taped in order to help me transcribe the conversation. I will, as well, keep field notes of each interview. As part of the study, you will be observed within the classroom by the researcher who will look specifically at your verbal and non-verbal interactions with the teacher. This observation will be recorded through field notes. All field notes and the transcriptions of interviews will be made available to you in order for you to review the contents for accuracy and allow you to raise any concerns about confidentiality. The findings of the study will be used in the thesis and may be discussed in academic meetings or published in research journals. To protect your confidentiality, your name will not be released at any time. On completion of the research all the paper files, audiotapes, and computer files will be retained in a controlled-access environment for further analysis and possible publication. Due to these precautions there should be no risk to you either personally or academically should you agree to participate.

The study also involves two members of faculty. The teacher responsible for the course will be interviewed four times to determine the design of the course and its curriculum content and to formulate pertinent questions in the student interviews. The researcher will not disclose to the teacher any student reactions or opinions. The other faculty member involved with the study will provide peer-review for the benefit of the researcher. The peer responder will be given access to the raw data. The information collected by the study will be discussed with the peer responder in order to insure that the interpretation placed upon it by the researcher takes into account other perspectives than his own. Again, the identity of individual students will not be provided to the peer responder.

Should you decide to participate, your involvement would include the following conditions:

I. You agree to participate in three individual interviews;
II. You may review the transcription of the tapes and my field notes for accuracy and matters of confidentiality;
III. If I require clarification of information you agree to my contacting you by either phone or email;
IV. You grant permission to quote your recorded interview statements using an assigned pseudonym to protect your identity both in the thesis as well as any presentations or other academic papers published subsequently;

V. You need not answer any question in the interviews that may be objectionable or uncomfortable for you;

VI. You may withdraw from the study at anytime without any consequences at all;

VII. If you decide to withdraw you may request that your data be removed from the study;

VIII. There is no remuneration offered in exchange for your participation within this study.

If you choose to participate in this study please complete the attached consent form and return it to me. You may decide not to participate, or withdraw from the study once it has begun, without explaining your reasons, and without any consequences to yourself. If you have any questions about this research, you can reach me at home by phone at (613) 226-1600, at work at (613) 727-4723 extension 5066 or by email nasonm@algonquincollge.com. You may, as well, contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Geoffrey Roulet by phone at (613) 533-6000 extension 74935 or by email rouletg@educ.queensu.ca. If you have any questions, comments or complaints about the research ethics of this study please contact the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré at (613) 533-6210, or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson at (613) 533-6081, or the chair of the Research Ethics Board of Algonquin College, Ms. Barb Foulds at (613) 727-4723 extension 5428, or by email foulsb@algonquincollge.com.

Yours sincerely,

Mac Nason
M.Ed. Candidate
Faculty of Education
Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario.
APPENDIX 4

STUDENT PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM

Faculty of Education
Queen’s University
Participant:

I, _______________________________, consent voluntarily to participate in the study Factors Influencing the Comfort Level of Students in Hybrid Web delivered Courses. It is likely that more students will want to participate than are needed in the study. The information provided by the response form will determine if you are selected for inclusion in the study. The researcher in this study is Mac Nason, a candidate for the degree of M.Ed. at Queen’s University. The thesis supervisor is Dr. Geoffrey Roulet. I understand that the thesis explores student reactions to hybrid Web delivered courses.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to examine the milieu within the learning environment of a hybrid course as perceived by the student participants. Understanding student perceptions of the milieu within this hybrid course may prove to be useful for other teachers working in similar situations.

I understand that my participation involves three interviews of approximately one hour in duration. In addition, I recognize that the researcher will observe me both in the classroom as well as within the online environment of the course. In each of these instances I have the right to review field notes and transcriptions in order to ensure accuracy and raise any concerns dealing with confidentiality. I understand that subsequent to the completion of the research all documentation will be retained in a controlled-access environment for further research and possible publication. I agree that the researcher may contact me directly in order to clarify information collected from the interviews and observations.

I agree not to divulge to others information obtained from my participation within this study.

I grant permission for the researcher to: (a) relate details of my interviews, (b) cite or quote my actions and words during the interviews or from classroom and online observations such as postings to communication boards within the course, (c) make reference to his own impressions of my reactions related to this study based on his field notes and conclusions. The data collected in this study will be shared with the peer responder. Your identity will be protected through the use of a pseudonym. Also, the peer reviewer is not to divulge information collected by this research with any third party. This permission extends to the preparation of the completed thesis and any presentations or future academic publications that might emanate from this research.

I understand that my identity will remain confidential. All written reports generated from this project will protect my identity through the use of a pseudonym. My identity and participation within this project will be concealed from the course instructor and the other members of the course not participating within the study itself. I will not reveal my participation in the study to anyone other than the researcher. I have been informed that this
research follows the principles of confidentiality, anonymity, and other ethical guidelines as established by Queen’s University and Algonquin College.

I acknowledge that participation in this research is voluntary. I may withdraw without any consequences at anytime. No explanation for my withdrawal is required. I have the choice to leave my data within the study or remove any or all of my data.

All of my questions and concerns about this research have been answered by the researcher. I have been informed that further concerns can be dealt with at any time by contacting the researcher Mac Nason at (613) 226-1600, nasonm@algonquincollege.com, or by speaking to Dr. Geoffrey Roulet at (613) 533-6000 extension 74935, rouletg@educ.queensu.ca. Further questions, comments or complaints may be directed to the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré at (613) 533-6210, or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson at (613) 533-6081, or the chair of the Research Ethics Board of Algonquin College, Ms. Barb Foulds at (613) 727-4723 extension 5428, or by email fouldsb@algonquincollege.com.

I have read and retained a signed copy of this consent form.
SIGNED: _________________________________ DATE: ________________________
Response Form

If you are willing to participate in the study, please complete the following. This information will be used to choose a sample of students for interviews from all of those who are willing to participate in this part of the study.

1. How familiar are you with the Web?
   _____ Beginner _____ Novice _____ Expert

   A person with no experience using the Web is a beginner.
   A person with limited experience using the Web, e.g., can perform basic searches but does not use the Web on a daily basis is a novice.
   A person with extensive experience using the Web, e.g., can perform complicated searches and uses the Web on a daily basis is an expert.

2. Have you had previous experience at the College or elsewhere with online learning?
   _____ No _____ Yes

3. Have you previous experience with Hybrid Courses? (A hybrid course is one that combines traditional face-to-face sessions with online based learning.)
   _____ No experience _____ Some experience _____ A lot of experience

4. How familiar are you with the Blackboard courseware installed at the College?
   _____ Beginner _____ Novice _____ Expert

5. Provide your name and contact information below. (Contact by email would be preferred.)
## COURSE OUTLINE

### PROFESSIONAL WRITING AND COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICE WORKERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Number:</th>
<th></th>
<th>Contribution to Program:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Core</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Applicable Program(s):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AAL: 02</th>
<th>Approval Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Services Worker</td>
<td>Winter 2005</td>
<td>November 2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Course Hours:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delivered:</td>
<td>48 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative:</td>
<td>48 hrs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Prerequisites:

<p>| | |</p>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENL1813S</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Corequisites:

<p>| | |</p>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Approved By:

Chairperson

Approved for Academic Year:

2004 – 2005

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

*This is a course which develops and improves the skills necessary for Developmental Services Workers to function efficiently and effectively as professionals in their field. Students will demonstrate the ability to write letters, memoranda, and reports which meet the required standards of the workplace. In addition, students will show their grasp of the advocacy process and their ability to argue and persuade in written and oral form.*
## RELATIONSHIP TO PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This is a vocational course that supports the following vocational program standards:</th>
<th>This course contributes to your program by helping you to achieve the following provincial generic skills standards:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| To be completed. | 1. Communicate clearly, concisely and correctly in the written, spoken and visual form that fulfills the purpose and meets the needs of designated audiences.  
2. Reframe information, ideas and concepts using the narrative, visual, numerical and symbolic representations which demonstrate understanding.  
3. Use a variety of computer hardware and software and other technological tools appropriate and necessary to the performance of tasks.  
5. Interact with others in groups or teams in ways that contribute to effective working relationships and the achievement of practical goals.  
7. Collect, analyse and organize relevant and necessary information from a variety of sources.  
8. Evaluate the validity of arguments based on qualitative and quantitative information in order to accept for challenge the findings of others.  
13. Represent her or his skills, knowledge and experience realistically for personal and employment purposes. |
### Course Learning Requirements/Embedded Knowledge and Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Learning Requirements</th>
<th>Knowledge and Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>When you have earned credit for this course you will have demonstrated an ability to:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1. Write clear, concise, coherent, correct prose for an intended audience. | - write with an awareness of audience and purpose  
- spell, punctuate and use grammar correctly  
- write, clear, correct sentences  
- write coherent, unified developed paragraphs, records and reports |
| 2. Write vocationally oriented business correspondence. | - carry out research  
- use appropriate content, style, tone, and format for letters, memos, and e-mails |
| 3. Write vocationally oriented reports. | - use electronic media  
- choose/follow correct format and write appropriately to target audience’s level  
- write with an awareness of the difference between subjective and objective statements |
| 4. Advocate orally and in writing. | - summarize information  
- make professional presentations |
| 5. Critique media representation of disabled persons. | - write grammatically correct prose  
- apply principles of critical thinking  
- analyse and synthesize information |
| 6. Use group process in managing meetings. | - apply principles of group and interpersonal communication |

### II. Learning Resources

To be announced by Professor.

### III. Teaching/Learning Methods

During this course you are likely to experience:
Lectures
Class discussions
Presentations
In class writing
Readings
Use of multi-media
Group work

IV. Learning Activities

A detailed explanation of learning activities and dates will be distributed during the first class.

V. Evaluation/Earning Credit

A detailed explanation of evaluation activities and dates will be distributed during the first class.

| GRADING SYSTEM |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                 | LETTER GRADE    | % GRADE         | GRADE POINT VALUE |
| Course learning outcomes are met in a consistently outstanding manner | A+ | 90 -100 % | 4.0 |
|                 | A               | 85 - 89%        | 3.8 |
|                 | A-              | 80 - 84%        | 3.6 |
| Course learning outcomes are met in a consistently thorough manner | B+ | 77 - 79% | 3.3 |
|                 | B               | 73 - 76%        | 3.0 |
|                 | B-              | 70 - 72%        | 2.6 |
| Course learning outcomes are met satisfactorily | C+ | 67 - 69% | 2.3 |
|                 | C               | 64 - 66%        | 2.0 |
| Course learning outcome objectives are met at a minimal level of achievement | C- | 60 - 63% | 1.7 |
| Course learning requirements are met, but achieved at a marginal level. | D+ | 57 - 59% | 1.4 |
|                 | D               | 53 - 56%        | 1.2 |
|                 | D-              | 50 - 52%        | 1.0 |
| Course requirements are not met | F | 49% or lower | 0 |
|                 | FSP             | 0               | 0 |
VI. Prior Learning Assessment

Evidence of learning achievement for PLA candidates will include:

- samples of incident, initial assessment and progress reports
- evidence of giving successful teaching presentations
- a description of writing done on the job and of how effectively it meets the criteria established in this course outline
- letters from employers attesting to specific on-the-job communication skills

If samples of reports are not available due to confidentiality, the portfolio may be supplemented by a challenge exam where, for example, an incident report and an initial intake report may be written.

Please see the English Coordinator for more information.

RELATED INFORMATION

STUDENT E-MAIL

Upon registration, each student is provided an Algonquin e-mail account which is used to communicate important information about program or course events. It is the student’s responsibility to check their Algonquin e-mail on a regular basis and to use their Algonquin e-mail account when communicating with professors, administrative staff or other students.

MODES OF INSTRUCTION

Programs at Algonquin College are delivered using a variety of instruction modes. Courses may be offered in the classroom or lab, entirely online, or in a hybrid mode which combines classroom sessions with online learning activities.

STUDENTS WHO HAVE A DISABILITY

If you are a student with a disability please identify your needs to the Centre for Students with Disabilities (CSD) so that support services can be arranged. You can do this by making an appointment at the CSD, Room C142, ext. 7683.

CRIMINAL CHECK POLICY:

"The School of Health & Community Studies advises that any student who has been convicted of an offense under the Criminal Code for which he/she has not been pardoned is required to disclose this fact to the potential field agency prior to the onset of field placement. The Field agencies and student will then be required to sign a letter of agreement indicating that the agency is accepting the student in field placement with full knowledge of the fact that
the student has an unpardoned criminal offense. In the event that all field agencies refuse to accept the student in placement, the department will assist the student in exploring other College program choices."

POLICY ON CONDUCT

Students in the department of Community Studies are expected to make themselves familiar with this policy to conduct themselves accordingly.

EVALUATION AND PROMOTION:

As a student in the School of Health & Community Studies your progress will be reviewed 4 (four) times a year (see Policy E 1 Promotion and Evaluation in your Student Handbook). This review process includes the Coordinator and all of the teachers of your program. The purpose of this review is to give you feedback on your overall academic performance, attendance and field placement preparation or evaluation.

These four meetings will occur:

1. mid-term in the fall semester
2. end of term in the fall semester
3. mid-term in the winter semester
4. end of term in the winter semester

At both mid-term meetings (fall and winter) you will receive a letter from the Program Coordinator giving you feedback on your overall progress. These letters will indicate one of the following:

a) you are doing well and to keep up the good work
b) you are experiencing difficulties in some areas (these will be listed) and please see your academic advisor
c) you are experiencing serious difficulties and may be put on academic probation or on a learning contract. In some cases you may also be asked to withdraw from the program.

ACADEMIC PROBATION AND LEARNING CONTRACT

If you are experiencing serious difficulties your academic advisor will sit down with you and review the recommendations of the promotion and evaluation committee regarding your overall performance.

ACADEMIC PROBATION is used to give you clear information about what grade point average or what overall performance you must meet in order to be allowed to continue in the program. These are usually defined in policy E11 College Grading System.

LEARNING CONTRACTS are used to give you specific feedback on areas you must directly address to meet the criteria for proceeding in your program. A learning contract is based on the recommendations of the promotion and evaluation committee. The purpose of the contract is to identify clearly for you the conditions for your continuance in the program.
The promotion and evaluation meetings, academic probation and learning contracts are tools the department of Community Studies uses to help you as a student understand the expectations of your program and to ensure that everything is done to help you succeed in your chosen profession.

If you are interested in finding out more about evaluation processes please talk to your teachers, your academic advisor, the program co-ordinator or the Chair Community Studies.

EXEMPTIONS

Exemptions may be granted to students who have successfully passed an equivalent course at a post-secondary institution. If you wish to ask for an exemption, you must apply to Cheryl Cote, Coordinator, B112c within the first three weeks of class.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. knowing the due dates of assignments;
2. maintaining a folder of all work done for validation claims in case of disagreement with teacher
3. ensuring that assignments are not plagiarised. Plagiarism is the submission of work that is in whole or part in someone else’s words while the student claims it as his or her own. The penalty will be a 0 for the assignment and possibly an “F” for the course.

Students, it is your responsibility to retain course outlines for possible future use to support applications for transfer of credit to other educational institutions.

SOFTWARE COPYRIGHT

In the past few years the Copyright Act has been updated to cover software. If the police lay charges against someone infringing copyright, the maximum penalties for a summary conviction are “a fine not exceeding twenty-five thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or both”. The maximum penalties for an indictable conviction are “a fine not exceeding one million dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years or both”.

Making a copy of software packages for your own use other than a backup copy of the package that you have purchased as allowed in your licence agreement would make you liable for the above penalties.

COLLEGE POLICY

“It is Algonquin College’s policy to give students the opportunity to complete a course assessment survey in each course that they take which solicits their views regarding the curriculum, the professor and the facilities.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>In-class</th>
<th>Online Activities and Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Course outlines, course overview and explanation of hybrid format. Intro to business writing: inductive vs. deductive strategy; memos.</td>
<td>Access the Yale web site on email etiquette. Write out a list of 10 rules of “netiquette.” Put a star beside the rules that you know you break. &lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.library.yale.edu/training/netiquette/">http://www.library.yale.edu/training/netiquette/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Business writing cont. - letters and emails</td>
<td>Email assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Recordkeeping in the human services field. Standards and ethical and legal issues in documentation and reporting information</td>
<td>Online group discussion &lt;br&gt;Case studies assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Basic report writing format: the Report Writer’s Pyramid. Incident reports</td>
<td>Incident report assignment &lt;br&gt;Read the information on incident reports at &lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.prenticehall.ca/rogers/1_4.html">http://www.prenticehall.ca/rogers/1_4.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Progress and investigative reports Collaborative writing</td>
<td>Online group discussion and collaboration &lt;br&gt;Investigative report assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Observation: Objectivity vs. subjectivity</td>
<td>Read and write a set of notes on the following web site: &lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-1100-lithuli.html">http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-1100-lithuli.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>In-class</td>
<td>Online Activities and Assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Observation, description and note taking: SOAP Writing client profiles</td>
<td>Client profile assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Writing up functional assessments, and Intake/initial assessment reports</td>
<td>IEP quiz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>BREAK WEEK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Writing clear objectives Plans of care/service, IEPs, IPPs</td>
<td>IPP assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group activity: Read the information on holding effective meetings found at <a href="http://www.boarddevelopment.org/display_document.cfm?document_id=24">http://www.boarddevelopment.org/display_document.cfm?document_id=24</a> Create a set of group notes of this web site.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Work period and consultation for IPP.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Effective meetings Small group behaviours and facilitation skills Group IPP meeting explanation and setup</td>
<td>Preparation for group meetings Meeting agenda Read some great tips on extemporaneous speaking found at <a href="http://www.ljlseminars.com/imprompt.htm">http://www.ljlseminars.com/imprompt.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Group IPP meetings</td>
<td>Finalization of IPP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Formal reports and proposals</td>
<td>Accessibility report assignment Website review of accessibility checklists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Work period and consultation for report</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Job search skills: Resumes and cover letters and interviews</td>
<td>Website review of job search documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>EXAM WEEK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Evaluation Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email assignment</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics case study</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incident report</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigation report</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client profile #1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPP</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case conference meeting</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility report</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client profile #2 (with Kristen)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class and online exercises/activities</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Protocol

- Unless otherwise specified, all assignments must be word processed. Assignments that have not been spell-checked will be returned unmarked.

- There will be activities and exercises completed in each class. In some classes, assignments will be started. As such, it is advisable that you not miss classes. Graded in-class activities can only be made up outside of class upon presentation of a doctor’s note.

- For most activities and assignments, collaboration with your colleagues is encouraged. However, unless otherwise specified, final assignment copies must be individually written.

- Any student who contravenes Algonquin’s Academic Honesty directive will be put through the E16 process.
APPENDIX 7

Week 7: Required Reading

SOAP FORMAT FOR RECORDKEEPING

S

Subjective information

O

Objective information

A

Assessment

P

Plan
CLIENT PROFILE

What is it?

A brief one or two page historical and developmental profile of client.

What is its purpose?

To provide essential information and a basic orientation to the client’s situation. Often used as part of a larger report such as an Individual Intervention/Program Plan, a report detailing results from diagnostic testing, or is used by current and future personnel for case management.

What does it consist of?

- Significant personal history
- Important relationships, such as family
- Basic personality profile
- Essential medical/physical information
- Interests and activities, education
- Summary of essential needs and greatest strengths

Information for client profiles can be gathered by following the first few steps of the SOAP process: collection of subjective and objective data.