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Online Education in Changing Times with Neil Mosley and Emmajane Milton

25th June 2020

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There is a distinction between emergency remote teaching and online education.

The characteristics of emergency remote teaching have been more of a sort of substitutionary approach, in that if you're used to teaching a classroom or a lecture then you will have kind of substituted that with a session similar through Zoom or Teams.

But online education looks quite different to that it involves a lot more planning and a lot more intentionality than that. It's less mediated through live sessions and that's what we're moving towards …. online teaching is going to form a large part of our near future and maybe our far future as well.

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Educators can be very unfamiliar with learning and teaching online. It is a mind shift really because it's fundamentally a different way of teaching. So there's a few different things and hurdles to get over, and ways which thinking needs to shift a little bit.

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TIME

The time you spend teaching students isn't principally at set time and for a set duration. Time flows differently in online education.

Online education typically is a lot more continuous and fluid, and it flows differently. So, one of the first hurdles in terms of thinking about online education is all those kind of scaffolds.

That's not to say that online education is suddenly very amorphous or unrestricted … it's really important to have a structure. But it's structured in a different way - one of the most common units of time really when we're thinking of online education is a week. So, what are we going to do in a week?

So, the first thing really is that it's a lot more fluid in terms of time and people who have chosen to study this way have usually done so because they want to study flexibly in and amongst the commitments that they might have. Obviously, the flexibility point is important at the moment because, whilst we seem to be coming out of lockdown in the UK, we don't know whether we might have another lockdown. So, we have to be agile and flexible, and people are experiencing things and have different circumstances that demand that as well.

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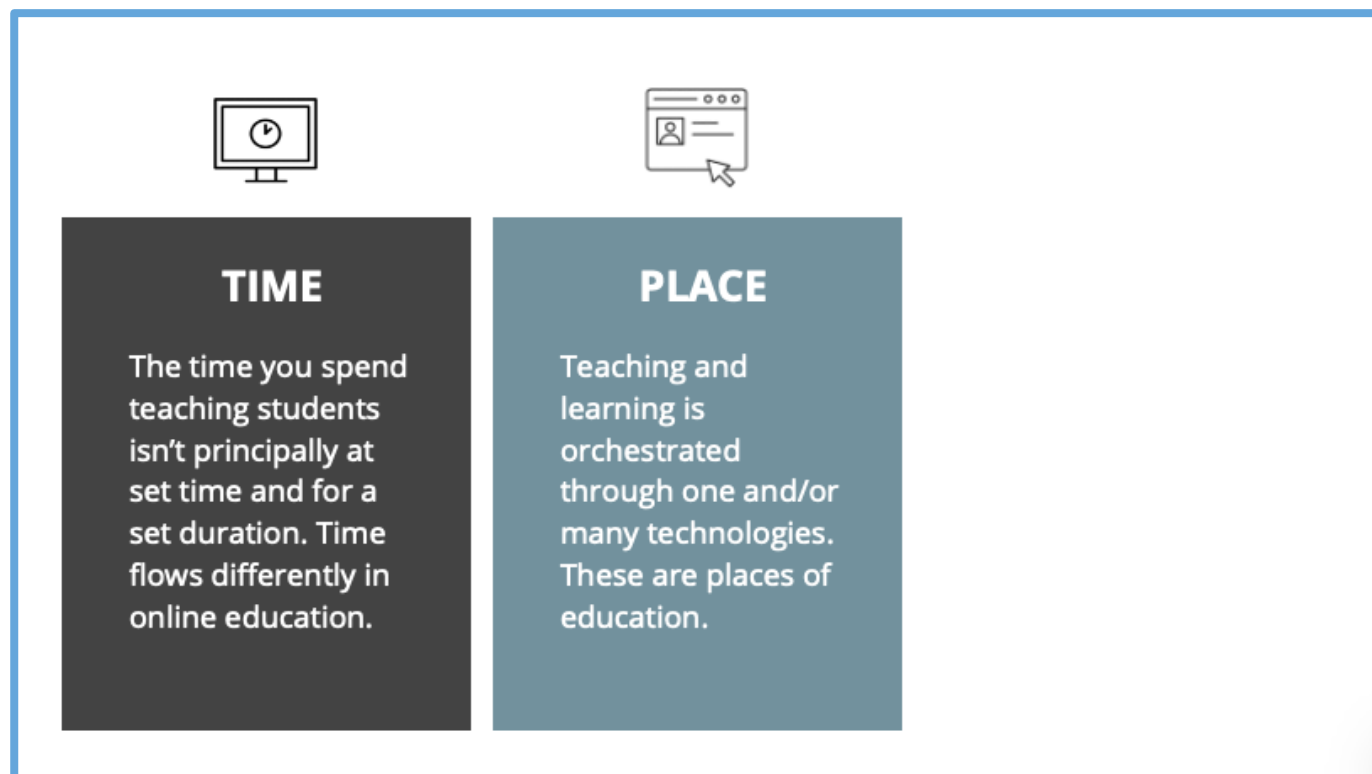
The next one is place - it's a really, really important one.

The digital learning environment, or the technologies, or the virtual learning environment (whatever you're using in your context) suddenly becomes incredibly important - it becomes a real place of education. It's a place which has parity with the classroom if we're thinking about blended learning – and that has a number of implications.

The first one in terms of professional practice, is the familiarity and the confidence that you might have in using those technologies, and using them quite expansively. It's well known, particularly in a university, that the learning management system (LMS) or the virtual learning environment (VLE) isn't always used that expansively. It's often used as a kind of supplement to face to face teaching. In online education and blended education it is really both coming together in a really meaningful way. The learning platform becomes much more than a repository, it becomes a place of communication, of community, of deep learning, of discussion. So, it becomes really, really important - an important place… in education.

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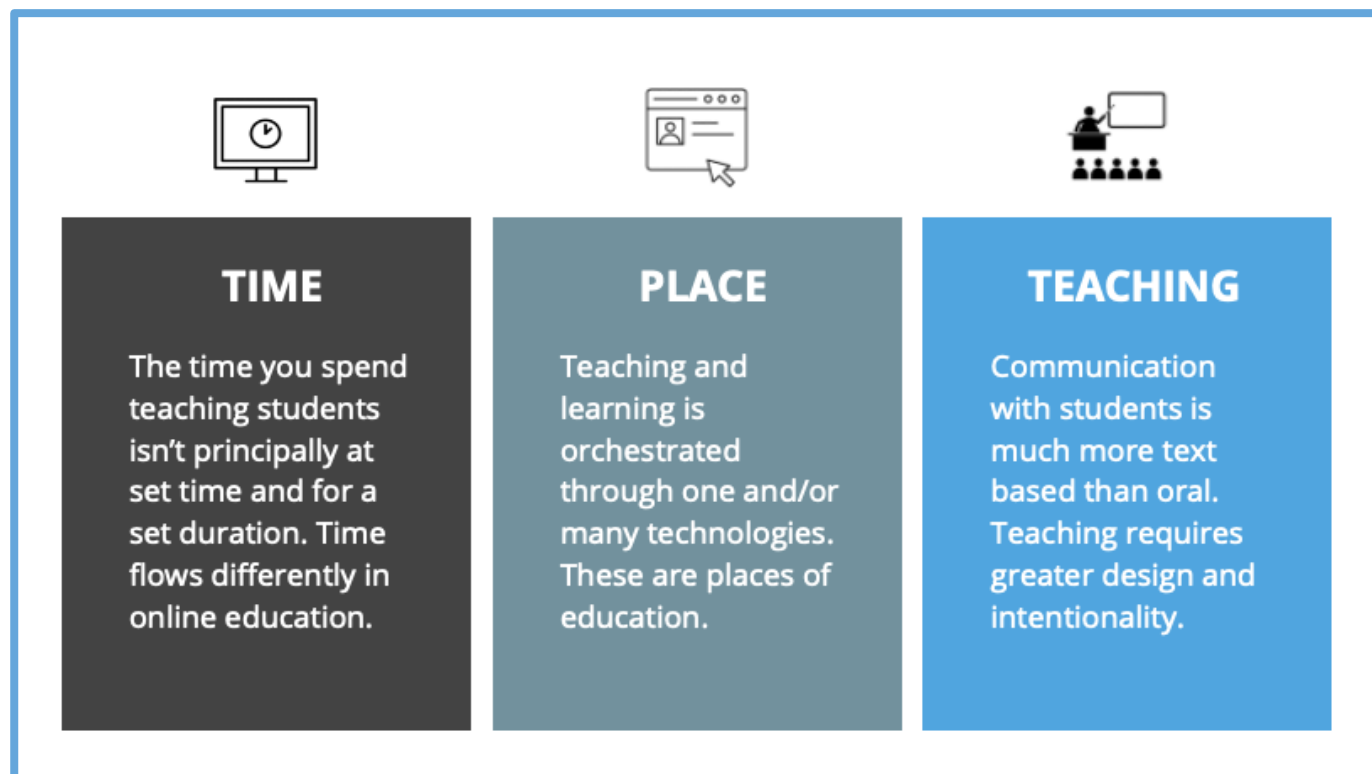
The last one… teaching. You'll likely be accustomed to teaching in a classroom… a lot of that will be automatic. You likely be really, really comfortable in that domain, you'll know how to communicate with students. You have the opportunity to read their faces and nonverbal cues, the body language, to have that back and forth with students.

That communication and dialogue looks very different online… in online education. A lot of communication is text-based and that has implications. Another implication in terms of teaching online is that it often does require more design and intentionality. There are more components.

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So, one of the really, really important things, is putting ourselves in the shoes of students. Never has this been more important given the things that people are experiencing at the moment and the times that we're living through. It's important to draw out some of those things, because they help us in terms of thinking about how you teach online, how you structure things, and how you design for online education.

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The first one is unfamiliarity. A lot of us are in that boat, where it is all very unfamiliar and might be quite uncomfortable. And I think to just extend that point, if we're thinking about a student that comes from school to university and arrives at a lecture, well, that's unfamiliar to them, isn't it? They won't have done that before. But to a certain extent it's not drastically unfamiliar because they'll have been used to sitting amongst peers, facing the front, and listening to someone teaching from the front. Whereas online education might be that you log into a virtual learning environment for the first time. You might never have really seen one before. So that's a starting point there's a greater degree of unfamiliarity there for students. That has implications for our design and how we welcome students into our courses.

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The next thing is access - that's a really, really important thing to think about. Sometimes we can make assumptions around the types of technology that students may have and their internet connections and their access to the technologies, and the content, and the activities that you may have designed or set online. There are all kinds of circumstances. Some people don't have devices or have difficulties in terms of the bandwidth. So, thinking about access issues and equity in terms of access for students is a really, really important thing.

Another part is online learning can be quite an isolating experience - it can feel like there's a real lack of support and not much engagement there in terms of the teacher.

Then there is motivation/engagement, and, you could say this for all of education. How do we motivate and get our students to engage? It's a challenging thing. But the modality of online education does present particular challenges around that.

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The last point is time management. It's a challenge for you and for students really. Because we're talking about going from this idea of a timetable that provides rhythm and structure around face to face lessons or lectures or classes. Suddenly if those things are removed then it's a bit like remote working maybe …suddenly those kind of scaffolds go and you have to think more carefully about how you manage your time and how you're self-disciplined. That's certainly a big aspect of online education.

So that gives you a bit of a picture around the challenges from a student perspective.

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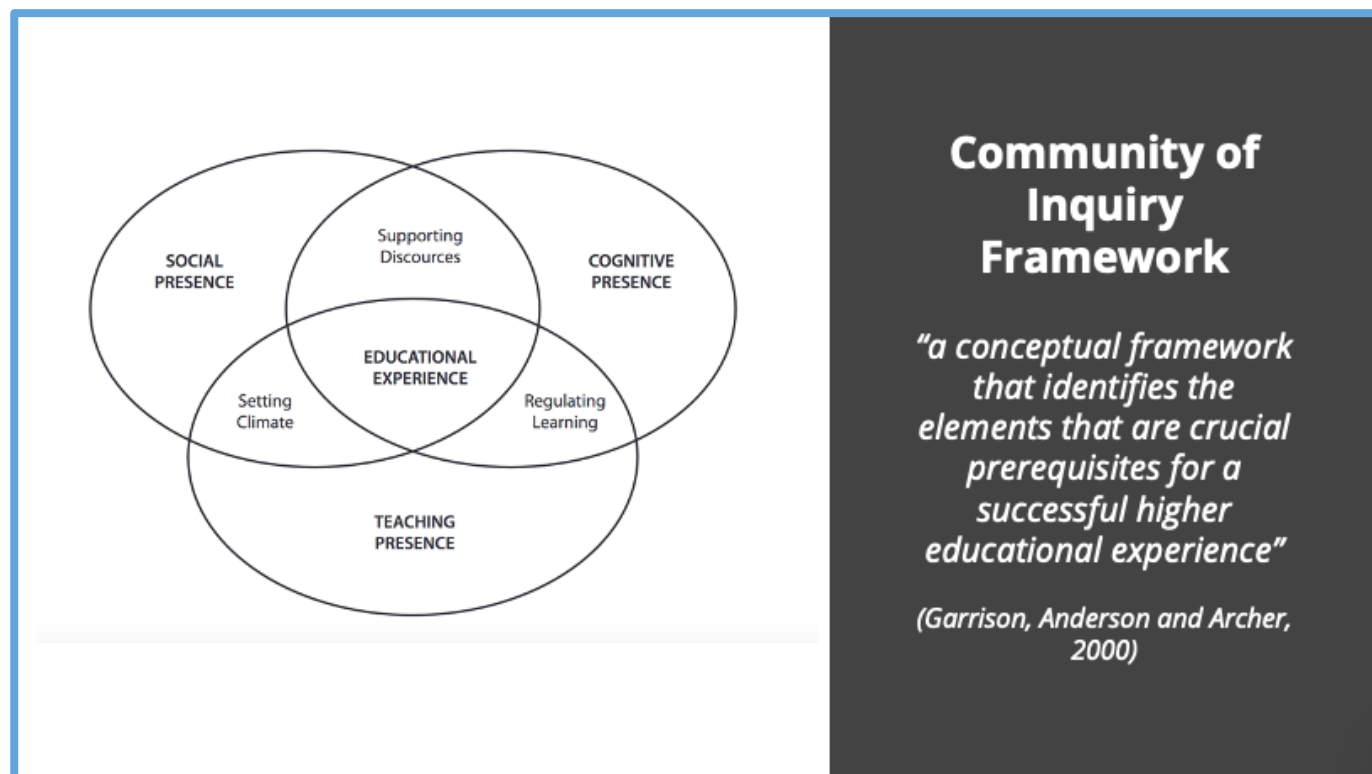
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We always need to be putting ourselves in the students' shoes when we're designing for any kind of learning. So, the next thing I really want to share with you is a framework that is used a lot in online education.

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The Community of Enquiry Framework - it's a really well researched framework from a number of researchers based in North America. It's used a lot in online education. Like a lot of frameworks it's not perfect. But what it does is it kind of helps give a bit of a scheme or a bit of a mental picture of things that need to be considered in respect of designing for online learning.

As it says it's really trying to identify a bunch of pre-requisites, a bunch of conditions that are really, really important for a successful educational experience. So, the main aspects are social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence and it might be a helpful framework for you to use if you're thinking about redesigning your courses.

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The first thing I want to talk about is social presence and what that might look like in practice. This is kind of really about community, about trust, about openness, and about laying those foundations for students to engage with one another and engage with you, engage with the learning materials, and just generally feel comfortable in that environment for there to be cohesiveness.

I suspect a lot of you do this, face to face without really thinking about it - you know how to make students comfortable - you know how to develop communication and trust and cohesiveness. But perhaps it's more unfamiliar in respect to how you do that online … but it's really, really important because if you don't have that foundation then some of your activities and the ways in which you want students to engage can fall flat. Sometimes people say to me, "Well, I did this but no one engaged with it." Sometimes it's because these conditions and the community hasn't been built or the environment hasn't been created. So, this is a really, really important aspect of online education. I'd like to go through a few things … they're kind of practical elements of advice.

The first one is, if you want students to be open and to share and engage with one another … you can't expect that if you're not willing to bring a bit of yourself and a bit of your personality to the course. That can be challenging really because it's a very different means of communication and presenting yourself to students. One really good way of doing that is the use of video. Videos are a really great way of bringing your personality and sharing and being open with students and trying to generate that community and that environment in your course. So thinking about use of video whether that be an informal welcome video or a sequence of videos that you start where you're speaking quite informally … that's a really, really good way of starting to build your presence and to develop those kind of relationships of trust. It may take a bit of practice to get used to video but this is a really, really good way of doing it. One tip I had was one of the things that you can do is you can record a video… um, where it's essentially unscripted but then you can use tools like YouTube which takes a transcript for you - you might want to use that transcript to then film the final edit. So there's a degree of informality and if you're a bit uncomfortable in what you might say, or mistakes (which aren't necessarily an issue but can be a problem for people, or make people feel uncomfortable) that could be a good way of doing it. The important point is they don't have to be polished …they're about bringing yourself and your personality to the course.

The next one a similar vein really is tone of voice. I think because a lot of communication is text based in online education, you can get very, very formal. So, it's worth thinking about tone of voice and how you bring yourself to that. There's certainly been research done on kind of the use of kind of emoticons and things like that to convey sort of the effective side of things. That's really, really important because you can easily slip into very formal language and the course becomes very dry and mechanistic. So that's an important consideration. I'm sure in the classrooms you do this a lot in terms of acknowledging and affirming contributions that students have made, questions that they've asked or things like that. This is really important in online education given the distance. So, if you're using text-based discussion forums, or you have activities… if you've got a video then you may want to… acknowledge students' contributions on a week by week basis. So, you may say, Sarah had a really great question, this week on the discussion forum, and James had a really good answer.

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Some advice on **social presence**

1. Be yourself and bring your **personality** to the course

2. Check your **tone of voice**

3. **Acknowledge and affirm** students contributions and mention them by name

4. Model online **behaviours and etiquette**

5. **Give students opportunities** for collaborative dialogue, creating spaces for students to discuss, exchange ideas and share experiences.

Thinking about that and being deliberate around acknowledging students' contributions can really help in terms of students knowing that you're there and that you care, and that's really important too. In terms of the social presence side of things, you're also going to be a model… in relation to how you communicate online, and etiquette. That's part of your role as well, I setting the standard in terms of how you communicate and the etiquette around that.

The last one really is giving the students opportunities for them to discuss and to share and get to know one another is really, really important. There's lots of debate around this in terms of, to what extent do we provide something and to what extent do we let students go and do their own thing? And there's no sort of easy answer to that. But giving students an opportunity within the course to share and get to know one another and discuss things is important. Students will inevitably find their own ways of communicating with one another as well. But that's an important part of, the socialisation aspect of courses. It's important that is set up and available online as well.

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What is **teaching presence**?

Covers planning and design of a course (activities & assessment), providing/creating content, how you interact with students and facilitate discussion, feedback and student progress.

"The design, facilitation and direction of [student] cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes"

Anderson, Rourke, Garrison & Archer (2001)

The next thing is teaching presence, which encompasses a lot of things. One of the themes through everything I've been saying is communication. If you equate things to a classroom setting… maybe explaining what you want students to do, there is the opportunity to read their faces and see their body language, for them to ask questions … and as a result maybe you articulate things in a different way. Whereas online there are a lot more opportunities for students to be unclear on what's expected of them. So, it's really, really important, doubly important, 'double underlined' to prepare really **clear expectations** of what it is that students are to do and this can also help you as well. If there is ambiguity then that results in lots of questions that can come your way, and that increases your workload but that might not have been necessary if you'd have spent more time providing clarity. Another important aspect is indications of time. I mentioned earlier that time management is challenging and this is a very flexible mode of studying. So giving students indicators of how long things might take is really helpful. It's often referred to as time on task but it's a really valuable part of students getting accustomed to learning in that way, and planning, and managing their expectations.

The next thing is **'check-in'** online. I'm always conscious that when I talk about the fact that time flows differently online, and I talk about checking in regularly online, it can stir up a lot of

anxieties. Does that mean I have to be online on my device, checking things, every hour of the day? The short answer is no, it doesn't mean that. But it means you being regularly present and making what you might term 'strategic interventions' so that your students know that you're there and involved, and that you're engaged in their study and learning. You might want to think about strategies for that, whether that's checking in half an hour a day - just checking in on progress, on activities, on posts and things of that nature. Having a strategy yourself can be really helpful, as can noting contributions as well. Checking in online regularly doesn't necessarily always mean that you have to be engaged or reply to students … if you're in a scenario where you know four or five or even more students are raising similar things, you might just want to make a note of that and actually address it at a later point to the whole cohort. That's part of being efficient with time because depending on a number of students and how your module is set up, you could easily feel overwhelmed. I think a good way to think about checking in online could be… thinking about a classroom setting … where maybe you've got students in groups, and you're hovering around so you can add a clarification or ask/answer a question. Where you flit between groups and are not necessarily directly answering or being present throughout, but they know that you're there and that you're on hand. So that's a good way of thinking about it in terms of equating it to maybe what you know.

The next is **synchronous and asynchronous**. Synchronous is this idea of live. So, a webinar, video based, chat based it could also be social media e.g. using a hashtag. The idea is it's at a set time where everyone's essentially there. Asynchronous is the idea that it's across a longer period of time and it's important to consider that because you've probably read about Zoom fatigue. I think, from both a student's and a teacher's point of view it can be quite fatiguing teaching in this way. It also can be challenging in terms of student access. If you're using synchronous means as your main way of checking in with students that could exclude those students who may find it difficult to get online at a set time or may have issues in terms of technology or bandwidth connectivity. So that's an important consideration of the synchronous and the asynchronous. It is also important to think about what is the value of the live aspect? What does it bring for what you're seeking to achieve and seeking to teach? I think you'll find most success in the majority of your teaching and learning being asynchronous but synchronous being used at the right time and for the right reasons.

The next one is **narrative story shape**. They're not the sort of words that you use around courses. It's usually kind of outcomes and objectives but it ties in with motivation and engagement and progress. You can't tell the story of your course online quite as well as you might be able to do in the classroom. So thinking about how things relate to one another, thinking about things in terms of a narrative or story or technique is thinking about your course in terms of answering a question. That can be a useful way of thinking about your course such that you structure your course and your materials in a way that conveys that idea of answering questions … there's some really interesting things being shared online in terms of infographics that people have created showing the progression through a course. That can be a useful way of students understanding … this is where we're going, these are the relationships that exist … that's important online because you don't have the scope necessarily to communicate that in the way that you might do face to face in a very sort of spontaneous way or in a way that's just what you're accustomed too.

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> ## Advice on **teaching presence**
>
> 1. Provide **clear expectations** and unambiguous guidance on what students are expected to do each week and how long it might take them.
>
> 2. **Check in online regularly**, provide input on student posts, encourage participation and check on student progress and offer feedback.
>
> 3. Consider carefully the **mix of synchronous and asynchronous** teaching and activity.
>
> 4. Think about the **narrative, shape or story** of your course, where are we going and how do we get there.
>
> 5. Design in **accountability** and **checking for understanding** loops.

The next thing is **accountability and feedback loops**. This is the idea that you post a video online but if you really want students to watch that, how do you know that they've… they've done it? So, thinking about these accountability loops is really helpful … a good technique around videos or reading could be a quiz that accompanies it and that students complete or maybe a short reflection or a discussion posting. It could be add a short response of what you think about something in the chat? or putting your thumbs up if you understand. It's those kind of loops that in online education you're pushing stuff out but you're not really sure are students kind of engaging with it? Are they present? So thinking about those loops is helpful for you in terms of understanding where students are at. There was some research done around quizzes that accompanied videos, and the understanding from a student perspective was that a quiz helped them in terms of attention to that video.

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The next thing maybe the trickiest - cognitive presence. This is the idea of real relevant challenging learning and really deep, meaningful learning. I've talked to some of this stuff already … quizzes often get derided a little and they're not always easy to write. But they are a good way of students reflecting and pulling out what they know and understand about the things that you've covered. They are a really good way, an active way of them learning. So, think carefully around their use, it doesn't have to be multiple choice questions it can be short answer questions. There could be a peer or a wider visibility aspect, where questions and answers are visible to other students and they might contribute, they're a really useful way of fostering a bit of examination around learning.

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## Advice on **cognitive presence**

1. Make use of **quizzes** (selected response and constructed response) for students to reflect on their learning and examine what they know.

2. Consider how technology offers opportunities for one to one and one to many and automated **feedback**.

3. Consider using **backwards design** to ensure content, activities and assessments all align to learning outcomes and avoid "busy work".

4. **Beware too much read, watch, listen** - what activities can you think of that will get student applying what they learned to problems and experiences?

Next is feedback, which we know is absolutely critical to the learning process, this is where technology can come into its own a little bit. So really considering how you can develop feedback in activities - that could be automated so that students get feedback instantly and they can act upon it or it could be used to direct them back to things that they may need to revisit. Video can also be a good way of providing plenary feedback. If you have large cohorts of students online and they're undertaking activity, it might be challenging to provide really good, individual feedback so technology around video might be useful to provide, feedback for a larger group. So thinking about opportunities for feedback and the way in which technology can assist you is really important.

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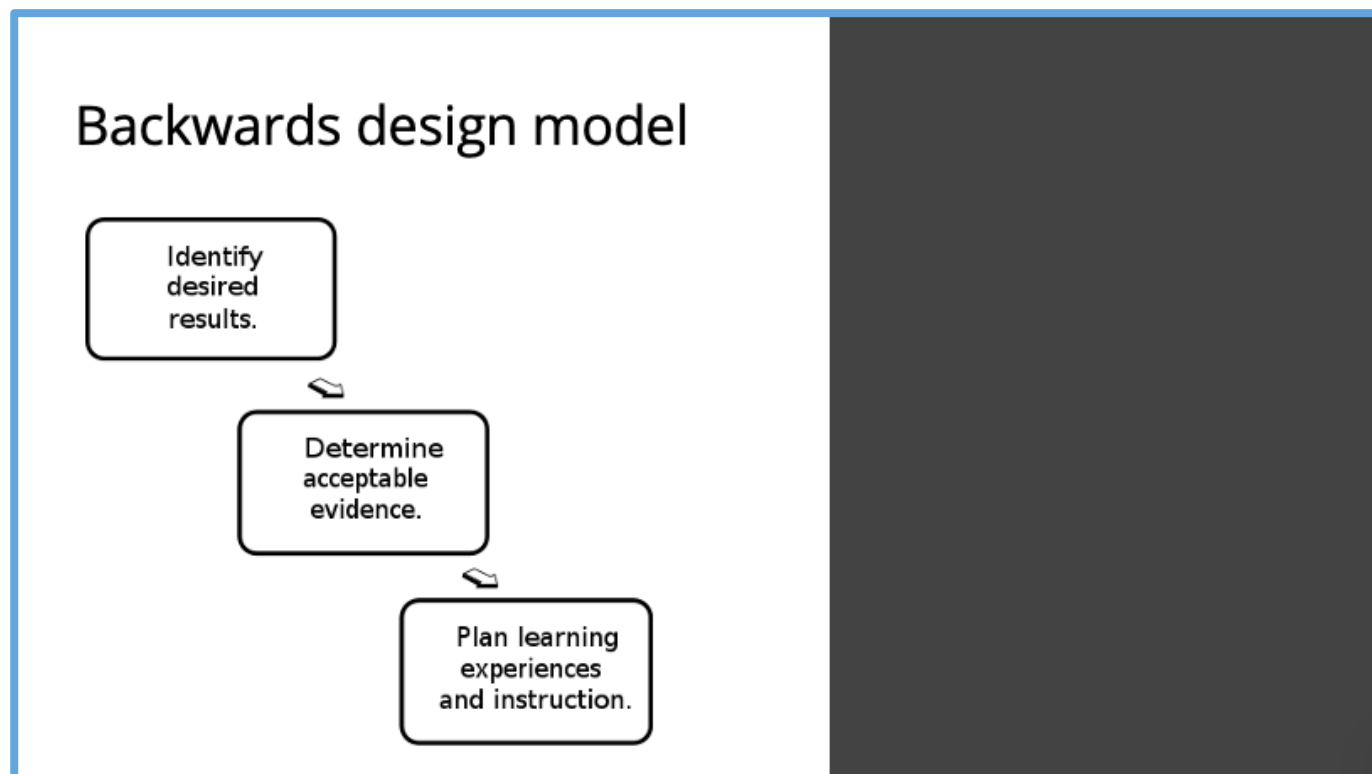
This model called backwards design is useful. We should be starting with outcomes and then thinking about the assessments and using constructive alignment. What I find is in online education, sometimes it's easy to skip out all of this stuff that you really should be thinking about because the modality and way of teaching is just so different.

So I would really encourage, people to think about this. To really think about where do we want to get to? What's the evidence of that? And only then start to think about the learning experience and the content. Because creating content can be really time consuming. Creating videos, writing things, that can be a really time-consuming aspect of it and you might find it's not as necessary. You might find that you can curate things from the web, or there's other materials that you can use. Thinking like this might help prevent wasting some time, which is going to be really precious.

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Types of content and activities online

Content

Video, audio, images, diagrams, visualisations, animations, text, articles, papers, websites/links

Activities

Quizzes, discussion forums, blogs, wikis, journals, polls, word clouds, collaborative boards or documents, mind maps, portfolios, student videos, peer review/assessment, simulations, presentations.

Online learning is a really active and engaging mode of education so beware of falling into that trap of thinking there's a great video here, or a great podcast here or this reading. Think about activities that accompany those things that get you to the outcomes that you're seeking for your students and will put them on a platform for success.

I just wanted to put a few different examples there. Some people will be really familiar with all of these things but sometimes it's helpful to just lay out a few things in terms of activities and content that might sort of spark some thought around what you might do. It's not exhaustive but it helps give you a picture of content and activities.

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- [Feedback and accountability loops for online classes - https://teachlikeachampion.com/blog/feedback-and-accountability-loops-for-online-classes/](https://teachlikeachampion.com/blog/feedback-and-accountability-loops-for-online-classes/)

- [Dos and don'ts on designing for accessibility - https://accessibility.blog.gov.uk/2016/09/02/dos-and-donts-on-designing-for-accessibility/](https://accessibility.blog.gov.uk/2016/09/02/dos-and-donts-on-designing-for-accessibility/)

- [About Universal Design for Learning (UDL) - http://www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html](http://www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html)

- ['Building bridges to the future: assessment which promotes learning post coronavirus - https://figshare.edgehill.ac.uk/articles/Prof_Sally_Brown_and_Prof_Kay_Sambell/12408968/2](https://figshare.edgehill.ac.uk/articles/Prof_Sally_Brown_and_Prof_Kay_Sambell/12408968/2)

- [Videoconferencing Alternatives: How Low-Bandwidth Teaching Will Save Us - https://www.iddblog.org/videoconferencing-alternatives-how-low-bandwidth-teaching-will-save-us-all/](https://www.iddblog.org/videoconferencing-alternatives-how-low-bandwidth-teaching-will-save-us-all/)

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Questions

Q: How we can increase online education skills personally so that we can be in the best position we can to support our students?

A: I think one of the really, really easy things to do is to actually take an online course yourself. Because it's highly likely that you were taught at a university in the way that you're now teaching. So if you have the opportunity to learn online then you're getting the chance to put yourself in the learner's shoes and getting ideas and certainly something I'd do just in terms of the design to see what other people are doing, and what pedagogies they're using. Platforms like Future Learn and Edx give you scope to take some free courses, and give you scope to experience that. It might be good, or it might be bad, but you can learn from the bad as well as the good.

Q: What's the future of online education in today's era?

A: I think it gives people much greater exposure. A lot of institutions have spoken about aspirations of using technology more in their teaching so that helps those institutions move closer to realising that objective. It's going to become much more accepted or at least much more experienced. Some people will really, really love that, and some people may harden their views on how they want to teach only in person. I think that's fine - it's helpful, isn't it really, to understand what you want. So I think it raises the kind of exposure to online, and that could change the way universities and colleges and schools are structured to a certain extent but it also probably makes us think a little bit more about the value of face to face. I think we taught in one way for a long time but probably without really considering what the affordances of that?

Q: Can you talk briefly about the difference between online education and e-learning?

A: It depends who you speak to really. For I have a strange association with e-learning. So this is not definitive but my association with e-learning is very much a kind of self paced type of learning that doesn't really involve any, social interactions with other students or with a teacher. So it's almost like a kind of pre-packaged product. But other people's definitions of e-learning would be akin to what I would describe as online learning which is what I've talked about today. Terms can be confusing for people when we have so many different terms for stuff.

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Q: How can we best support students with SEN who may not have access or at best limited access to devices?

A: It is a challenge and maybe it's important we pick up on terminology again. I've talked about online teaching but actually distance education is much more established. So it may be that you could provide some physical stuff for students if devices or access are an issue. It could be thinking about a means of getting materials to students, it depends a little bit on what devices they have. Distance education doesn't have to be mediated through technology, you might be able to provide something and then think about how you then engage with students around how they'll be using those materials and how you might follow up and give feedback. So, don't underestimate the power of very simple, easy, text based conversations for an engaging with learning.

Q: How might we help shy students/learners engage? And how do you get them to feel confident to contribute?

A: It's understanding a little bit of what the barriers might be. Because often online education provides a way in which shy students can be more comfortable. In any classroom, you might have people who are very, very comfortable speaking and asking questions, and sometimes those students actually thrive in an online environment because they don't have that pressure. They can really think about what they're going to say as it doesn't have to be so immediate. So, giving students the opportunity to ask questions asynchronously is really important, because having to contribute at that particular immediate point can raise the sort of anxiety that might inhibit students from contributing. So, think about slower chats, think about using discussion boards where students like that can carefully consider their responses. You could think about technologies that enable anonymity as well, that can be useful.

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Q: When is best to use synchronous and asynchronous activities? For example, with adult learners would you tend to use synchronous for more discussion and do a type of 'flipped classroom' with some pre-classwork?

A: That could be really valuable. I'd also say that the discussion could be just as rich asynchronously as it can be synchronously. It's challenging thinking about the blend because it's not just the synchronous - it's also the face to face. There's no perfect ratio or perfect balance around how you do this it's more about what we know is good for education. So the importance of students' relationship with you and the importance of students' relationship with each other is crucial - so actually the live component can almost have a multiplier effect. So if you think about students' relationships with each other then you can use breakout rooms to foster that. Students being able to see and have a live element can really help in terms of their relationships and the relationship that you develop with them through the discussion, through that type of approach. The flipped side of things certainly can work online and that's a good way of using synchronous. But also important is just thinking about the broader principles of what makes a good learning experience and how you being present can sort of help with that.

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Questions

A: What are breakout rooms and how you might use them?

Q: Breakout rooms - we could set up a number of different rooms on this zoom session and we could allocate a number of people to those rooms. So, say we wanted to have groups of five students we could set that up and allocate students to rooms and then they would go off into that room and it would just be contained. Those five people in that room are able to share screens, use their microphones, use their videos, so it's useful for a couple of different things. 'Think, pair, share' is another of those techniques that you could use … break students up into pairs using breakout rooms to think about a question and then come back into the main room and share. I've also seen it used around kind of problem-based scenarios … where the lecturer says something (outlines a task), and then splits students up into groups and gives them an hour or so to discuss and to produce a product, and to come back into the room and share it. So those are the main ways in which you may want to use breakout rooms.

Q: Is it possible to record in individual breakout rooms? (or does that depend on the platform you're using?)

A: I think most of the time you can't record breakout rooms. I can't speak for all types of breakout room technology but most of the time when I've explored that, it hasn't been possible.

Q: What are the mental health impacts of working in this way and what is the research? Can it negatively impact on teachers? students? children?

A: The current post COVID situation is very particular - a unique situation, with emergency remote teaching. So we have to be very conscious of everyone's mental health. In respect to online education there are things like the amount of time spent online … many of us will have heard of Zoom fatigue. So that aspect of online learning can be a bit stressful particularly if you're a student who, doesn't have a quiet study space or you don't have the technology and you're expected to be at a certain place at a certain time and engage in learning. So that can have an impact. In terms of mental health for teachers it is around expectations … some of the strategies that I mentioned earlier can help with that. Remembering you don't have to respond and be present all of the time - you can easily default into that and set the expectation that you are always going to be 'on' - that's not good for anyone really.

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Q: Is it good practice if you ask students to use apps that are different to those the university (or your employer, local authority) recommends? because in some platforms, using quizzes for example, might be more tricky than in other platforms - so what's the best thing to do from an effective practice point of view?

A: There are other considerations than effective practice. One of the reasons why universities (employers / local authorities) have a certain pool of technologies is that they've done due diligence on those technologies. So whilst, there are some instances where you can adopt third party technologies and there is not an issue, it's possible to be on dodgy ground if you don't use the supported technologies because of things like data, GDPR, and considerations like that.

In terms of practice there is merit in considering, an alternative technology because, you want a technology that supports your learning and teaching. However, where it gets confusing is for students who are using a whole myriad of different stuff, and that require users to download an app or to have a specific operating system. So again, putting yourself into students' shoes is really important because if there are problems from a student point of view that you haven't considered then however good it might be is negated because it could go awry. I think universities are increasingly thinking, particularly on the social and the communication chat side of a mixed approach - so (universities in the UK) using things like a virtual learning environment but also accompanying them with things like Microsoft Teams. So in short think about students - don't overburden and overwhelm in terms of more work choices and I guess think about in terms of your institution and the possible pitfalls around adopting a technology that is out of that suite or not supported centrally.

From a school point of view its similar when there are lots of platforms for children and families to try and navigate, that's can be overwhelming. A pleas from parents has been that very simple guides are produced not just for children / pupils but also for parents, to help them engage and try to learn and get a little bit more familiar. There are lots of different platforms and apps that schools use trying to get used to them can be challenging, especially of your children feel they 'have to' use them for school work.

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Q: Is it possible for there to be parental engagement in online learning at the same time as the children so that the parents can help? Is there a better way of being able to engage parents online?

A: As a parent, I can appreciate some of the kind of challenges. So this is often about people's own familiarity with technology and confidence around it. There could be opportunities for some, shared activities which can help parents think about the skills that they have/need and then how they can support their children. As a parent of a 9 year old, what I have found fascinating has been his ability to guide me with some online learning … it's been quite remarkable. I think children are often more confident in trying things out and can be more intuitive, happy to have a go and work it out. My son discovered how to use breakout rooms on Zoom before I did and then taught me! So I think there's some really interesting things to consider about what we imagine children can and can't do.

There are definitely complexities with different platforms and what homes have access to. But I think there are certainly opportunities to provide shared learning experiences that could be really beneficial. Notwithstanding parents are very busy I'm conscious there are many parents who would like opportunities to develop with their children. Another aspect of is thinking about design and thinking about can you design something that a student may have to do and then discuss with their parents? So thinking around designing to encourage questioning and discussion between students and parents.

I think in online education, and really conveying the purpose and the meaning of the things that you're asking students to do is really important - the extent to which you're explaining why it is important for them to do something? Where does it take them? What's the value? … that's important irrespective of this particular situation.

Q: How do we see some of this working with younger pupils?

A: Many of the same principles are fundamental because they're just good pedagogical ways of thinking about learning and teaching. So, while the tenor and tone and the way we explain things depending on the age of our children will be different the fundamental principles of thinking about learning design, and that approachability … that relationship building … is so important. That also relates strongly to the recent research from the Children Commissioner for Wales which addressed the need for children / pupils to have contact with learning with their teachers and friends. So thinking about how those activities could be facilitated is vital.

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It's interesting lots of colleagues are talking about what parents could do, how parents may be able to help … perhaps with materials to support, to mentor their children as learners. But equally acknowledging that some of these ways of working aren't established and need significant support. Also acknowledging that lots of parents may not want to or be in a position to be able to help at all. So the need to think really creatively about the different options that can be made available to children because we don't know different children's circumstances and situations. Similarly, we don't know with our students. I've got students who have suddenly found themselves in quite significant caring roles during this period … there's all sorts of things that we need to consider when thinking about how to use online learning.

Q: Can you recommend some good websites with access to online courses?

A: Future Learn, Edx

Q: What are the differences when you compare face to face teaching and online learning and thinking about the difference in time. So, does that mean there should be more activities and content in an online session? Or less because time operates differently?

A: The most important bit is that activities are joined up… they relate to one another. I think an online session could involve a bit more activity. It could involve breakout rooms, it could involve pairing. The important consideration is to what extent should a classroom session or a lecture be someone covering stuff in slides versus to what extent should it be interactive? There has to be a melding of the two. I don't think there's any particular ratio neither does an online session, a live session, need to be an hour or 50 minutes. You know? Just because it's live doesn't mean it has to be a kind of increment of time that we know, that we default to. It could be half an hour It could be 20 minutes and then an activity that's done online and they come back on.

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Q: What does research say about the impact of engagement if everybody has their cameras off?

A: I haven't seen any research on whether people have their cameras off or not. I don't think the enablement of video has to inhibit engagement. Without cameras the discussion and the text chat can be just phenomenal - really, really engaged. So, the disablement of video doesn't have to affect engagement. The enablement of video can create problems in terms of engagement, because if we're thinking around shy students, it is going to be another barrier to their engagement. They might feel really, really self-conscious? Especially, if they're in a scenario where their house doesn't have a quiet study space or they're embarrassed about their surroundings… how is that going to help them feel confident? So there's a few considerations around that. I haven't seen any problems in terms of engagement if video isn't used.

Q: Is this about rethinking? About this not being a binary choice anymore of online or offline, but thinking about it as an educational way of working, a new way of working.

A: That's one of the aspects of working in online education that I enjoy. Because often people will have taught a certain way and adopted a certain way of teaching because it's the done thing. So actually the kind of conversations online education encourages and the way in which it opens up questions like … what is the value of face to face? What is the value of online? What is the purpose of all of this? How do we think about all these things? That's a really rich, interesting conversation, I think that's really positive - not just to have exposure to teaching online but being kind of forced to really question. I think that's really valuable for us that we're having that kind of discussion.

Q: Some schools aren't allowing live teaching at all but the presentation has really helped me think more broadly about online education and what it can and should be. I think that's really important because whilst there will be all sorts of external parameters and limiters, and things that we've got to navigate, there's ways of us thinking creatively around what this could be and the variety of ways in which we can attempt to engage students and children at a distance.

A: Yeah one of the traps it's easy to fall into is that learning happens online. Learning doesn't happen online. It happens here [points to head] …. so actually thinking about what things can you do with your learners? Thinking about shaping activities around the learner and their environment and dialogue. Online is just a platform. The key is the way in which you communicate your intentions of why it's important, and you how you set activities, and that you have feedback.
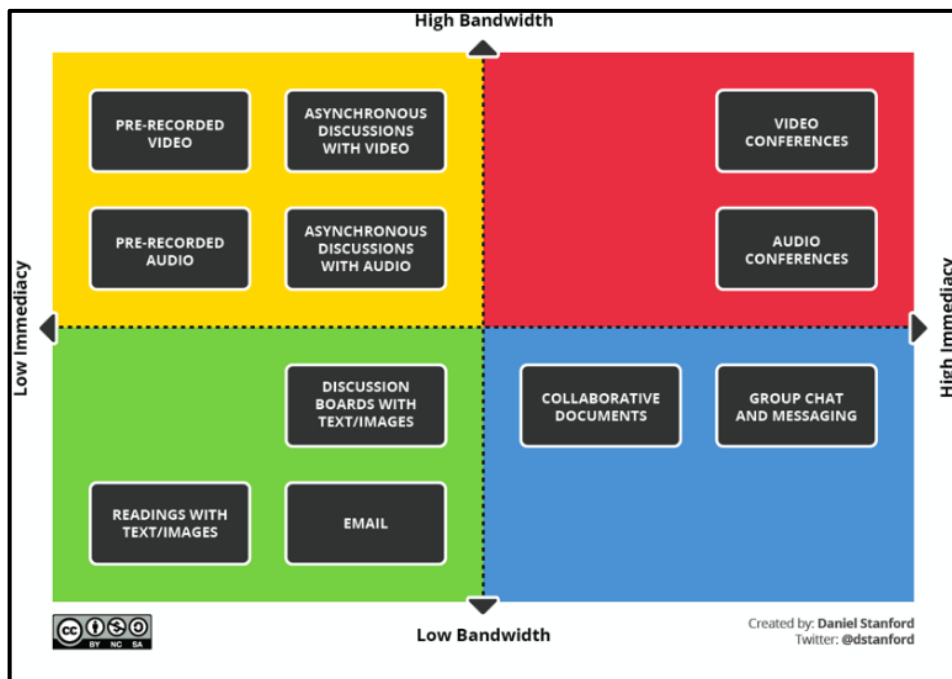
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Q: How can we engage learners in rural communities where there may be less access to Internet, to… electricity. What can we do, what options are there in those contexts?

A: On a sort of a principle level, here's a really great infographic on this.

It talks about low immediacy and low bandwidth, and high immediacy and high bandwidth. So this webinar is high immediacy and high bandwidth. You're here at 2 o'clock (BST) and you've got your video switched on and you're hearing me. Low immediacy and low bandwidth might be something like email or text chat. So those are the kind of things that are important to consider in terms of rural communities where the connectivity might be difficult, or the access to technology might be difficult. The early stages of distance education can be very much a text based and in considering learning design its possible to think about using a lot of audio-based stuff rather than videos… to reduce the bandwidth. There's a lot of power in text-based discussions, you sharing what you want students to do, and you offering feedback and support. Thinking about accountability and developing relationships. So, don't underestimate the value of a text-based discussion for a whole range of different aspects of education.

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Q: Do you know whether there are any issues around data protection if online lectures are recorded and then shared asynchronously?

A: I can speak a little bit to the university context because some of those discussions would have been had around the recording of lectures. So I think there'll be policies in place in most university contexts. In terms of the potential issues, I guess that's where in respect of online education, it's really a team sport… thinking about the people in your institution that can address those concerns. Thinking about the right things … your librarians will be amazing at that. So that's where people can really pull together and it becomes a real team sport - draw on people who have real expertise in your institution to help with you.