

**Title:**                   **Implementing the new blended learning**

**Presenter:**           **George Roberts, Richard Francis, Mary Deane**  
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### **Session Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- suggest practical approaches in educational development to interpreting, disseminating and implementing a new blended learning (post-digital) curriculum
- share new blended learning (post digital) learning activity designs that are responsible and authentic to learners' points of origin, disciplinary epistemologies, and practice (including TEL) as it is.

### **Session Outline**

The authors are engaged in a conversation, which has moved across new physical and online spaces, through arguments for and against the digital in education and back to many of the ideas that have shaped academic discourse and institutions (Francis and Roberts 2014). Physical and virtual spaces of learning and learning itself are ever more fluid. All participants are co-constructors of both the space and of the learning that occurs within it. In our post-digital heterotopia (Foucault 1984), all spaces are revealed as spaces between (Meyer and Land 2003, Bhabha 2004). New learning environments, apps and the cloud are bridges between an older vision of blended learning (Raftery and Francis 2005, Sharpe et al 2006) and a future that is continuously emergent.

We face a conundrum however. Our model of good learning practice, derived from the practical wisdom of older face-to-face AND online distance learning may appear uncontentious. Learning is active, dialogic, experiential, participatory, outcomes-led and reflective. Self-evidently, people are different; learning takes place in communities and is engaged with and through technologies. There is good evidence for the benefits of dialogic, participatory learning (Guache 2014), where deliberative reflection arises from and is a skill for distributed collaboration (Stuart-Buttle 2014). The conundrum is, if we know this, and have for years been advocating transformative learning (Mezirow 1997) based on these and similar principles (e.g. Chickering and Gamson 1987), why do we now find learners, institutions and the curriculum still in such tension over TEL, in an environment of ambiguity, anxiety, power and ideology (Morrison 2014)?

Instead of laying out good practice and providing examples of implementation, we want to ask what is not working? Why, when we believe we know what good learning is and, arguably, how to create curricula, courses and events which are designed for good learning,

do we continue to experience ambiguity and anxiety about not only individual roles but the purpose of higher education?

### **Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

The outline of the workshop is as follows;

People should be in groups of 4-6 around tables.

1. Framing the discussion (five min presentation). Between the utopian and the real, the troublesome threshold - blended learning as heterotopia
2. "Affective recall" (10 min discussion in pairs). Think of a recent learning situation, event or course (as a teacher or participant online or off) that made you feel anxious or alienated, that you felt just wasn't working. Without going into too much detail, what words might you use to characterise that learning situation? After an initial two minutes thinking time, each person "interview" the other in the pair (four minutes each way) to build a list of words to characterise the situation.
3. Conversation menu (20 min small-group discussion). Small groups around cabaret tables will be provided with "conversation menus" [link coming shortly] inviting people to problematise generally accepted good practice. A shared Google doc will be provided for participants to engage in collaborative writing around the menus.
4. Plenary discussion (10 min) From counter examples to exemplary practice. Synthesis and final questions

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