BLENDED LEARNING: TAKING TEACHING & LEARNING BEYOND THE WALLS

by

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Purpose of Study

In higher education, there is rapid growth in Internet usage, particularly the use of educational technology and learning management systems such as Schoology (Arispe & Blake, 2011; Georgouli, Skalkidis, & Guerreiro, 2008; Kim & Bonk, 2006; Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003; Wu & Lin, 2011; Young, 2002). Schoology, created in 2009 by three Washington University graduates Jeremy Friedman, Ryan Hwang and Tim Trinidad, is a **"**learning management system (LMS) and social network that makes it easy to create and share academic content" and is designed to enable "educators to do things as simple as posting assignments, quizzes and links to additional resources or as sophisticated as conducting online courses, providing one-on-one remediation, or hosting discussions. Schoology connects students and parents to educators and learning resources anytime, anywhere in a safe, secure online environment" (Schoology 2009; Moran, 2010; Kim, 2009). Schoology also provides various instructional tools including organizable lessons and self-paced learning, threaded discussion boards, micro-blogging, and content migration and imports. Furthermore, Schoology combines online learning, classroom management, and social networking with an architecture similar to Facebook providing individual profiles, an event calendar, personal messaging, grouping, and allows faculty to monitor the amount of time students spend using Schoology (Schoology, 2009).

This swift progression seen in higher education comes from the increased access available to both faculty and students along with the desire and demand for flexible and innovative instruction. For instructors and learners, the resources available have expanded greatly providing more online educational resources during the last decade (Arispe & Blake,

2011; Georgouli, Skalkidis, & Guerreiro, 2008; Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003; Young, 2002). The experiences of faculty using educational technologies and learning management systems such as Schoology include the following: those who are aware of the tools available and actively incorporate these instruments into their pedagogical knowledge, curriculum and course design (Auslander, 2010; Gredone, 2010); aware of the tools available but lack understanding how to utilize the learning instruments (Green, 2010; Hull, 2010); struggling to make a connection between the tools available and their pedagogical stance (Starkey, 2010b); and as I have observed, faculty who choose not to incorporate educational technologies within their course design.

Online educational resources are becoming more popular in the everyday lives of students (Bennett, Bishop, Dalgarno, Waycott, & Kennedy, 2012). The student experiences, as described in the research, include students who thrive with online resources, students who find using online educational resources to be overwhelming and limiting (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003; Rheingold, 2010), and again through observation, students who discount educational technologies as a learning tool. These experiences, both faculty and student, are the prime targets of this study.

This study focuses on faculty teaching experiences and student learning experiences of those who use educational technology resources, specifically Schoology, as a learning management system. Moreover, this study discusses the practices of faculty who do not use Schoology in their courses, the pedagogical knowledge and reasoning behind these understandings, the benefits and limitations of using Schoology as a learning management systems verses distance learning or other learning management systems (eCollege), and develops a new understanding for the use of learning management systems as a learning tool

in higher education. Also, the study will explore the pedagogical construct and philosophies that structure faculty and student stances on the integreation of learning management systems to formulate a blended learning or hybrid environment.

The purpose of this study is to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the ways in which educators implement learning management systems to create connections with their students and the experiences students have with this application to further enhance the learning experience in higher education. In addition, the study will reveal philosophical beliefs and teaching philosophies to aid in understanding the decision to use or not use learning management systems. In conclusion, the reader will acquire a perception for blended learning as a constructive course and curriculum design in higher education for faculty and students.

II

Theoretical Background

Educational technologies are growing at an intense rate with online tools becoming more popular and evident in the daily lives of students in higher education (Arispe & Blake, 2011; Georgouli, Skalkidis, & Guerreiro, 2008; Kim & Bonk, 2006; Young, 2002). Additionally, some faculty have begun to explore the Schoology resources available for students and how learning management systems can be used to engage students in course content (Bennett, Bishop, Dalgarno, Waycott, & Kennedy, 2012).

For some faculty, the usage of technology and learning management systems leads them to evaluate their teaching philosophy and pedagogical decisions. For others, the use of technology may be a direct outgrowth of their pedagogy. Howard Rheingold (2010) presents five social media literacies that are interconnected to enhance student learning through educational technologies. The five literacies include attention, participation, collaboration, network awareness, and critical consumption (Rheingold, 2010). In using educational technologies and learning management systems, faculty might organize their approach around the five literacies as they fit their pedagogical stance and course design. This allows for faculty and students to expand thinking beyond only digital skills and incorporate the interconnected literacies to increase student engagement and learning beyond the classroom (Rheingold, 2010).

Pedagogical content knowledge, as explained by Shulman[1] (1986; 1987), sets the framework for technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK), which is growing to

[1] Lee Shulman has spent his professional life advocating for the importance of teaching at all levels, from kindergarten through graduate school. He is best known for his work on the knowledge base of teaching, including the construct of pedagogical content knowledge, for his efforts to promote the scholarship of teaching in higher education, and for his studies of

be a vital resource in selecting educational technologies and how these technologies could be used to increase student learning (Starkey, 2010b). Shulman's (1987) model provides a scaffold for thinking and development which supports TPACK in the growing digital age leading teachers and students to gain new understandings, develop new comprehensions, and together create new knowledge through the teaching and learning process (Starkey, 2010b).

In using educational technologies and incorporating social media literacies, faculty can reframe the structure of their course design and create learning experiences to engage students and construct new knowledge and skills. Although he was not speaking of technology, Paulo Freire's [2](2001) statement provides an example of the role educational technology, especially learning management systems, can have when used as part of the course design: "instead of a teacher, we had a coordinator; instead of lectures, dialogue; instead of pupils, group participants; instead of alienating syllabi, compact programs that were 'broken down' and 'codified' into learning units" (p. 81).

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professional education. (Shulman, 2008)

[2] Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educator, philosopher, and influential theorist of critical pedagogy. Freire developed an approach to education that links the identification of issues to positive action for change and development. While Freire's original work was in adult literacy, his approach leads us to think about how we can 'read' the society around us. (Freire

III

Significance of Study

In using educational technology, specifically focusing on learning management systems, there are various common beliefs about the purpose and effects of enhancing student learning. These beliefs include:

- Creating a richer and more meaningful learning experience, engaging students both within and outside the classroom (Brown, 2010),
- Collaborating within the classroom and the community, locally and globally (Auslander, 2010),
- Accommodating student learning curves, encouraging students to use multiple resources and demonstrating those resources to students (Gredone, 2010),
- Facilitating interaction and participation, increasing student-centered learning, sharpening critical thinking skills, expanding course enrollment, aiding students in finding their voice and developing a class community (Hull, 2010),
- Reaching a global audience (Jacobs, 2010), and
- Developing new comprehensions together as faculty and students (Shulman, 1987).

The experiences of faculty, both those who use the online education resources and those who do not, shed light on the pedagogical reasons and philosophies behind using such technologies, particularly in the growing digital era. Faculty hold teaching philosophies and pedagogical stances, some of those ideas include Freire and Shulman. The unique experiences behind the decision to use or not use a learning management system imbedded in their course will provide an understanding of how those decisions are made and the implementations of technology being used.

Moreover, the experiences of students provide a unique perspective on the different preferred mode of instruction (online, face-to-face, or blended), and what makes educational technology tools, specifically learning management systems like Schoology, attractive or unattractive as a learning platform. Students experience a divide between living technologies and learning technologies, meaning technology that is used in everyday interactions with family and friends (texting, Facebook, Twitter) versus technology used in a formal learning setting (Schoology, eCollege, Blogs) (Waycott, Bennett, Kennedy, Dalgarno, & Gray, 2009). Further, student perspectives bring to light the possibility of blended learning as a favored approach to learning and course model. Blended learning is a trend that combines various approaches to learning and modules together, in this case face-to-face interactions and lectures with a learning management platform (Banerjee, 2011).

IV

Relevant Literature

To gain a deeper understanding of the faculty and student experiences using Schoology as an educational tool, we must first look at the current research. The research includes defining educational technology and discussing the evolution of educational technology and resources. In addition, the research discusses various pedagogical theories, specifically focusing on pedagogical content knowledge and blended learning theory, and previous faculty and student experiences using technology, specifically a learning management system, as part of the course.

Defining Educational Technology

Definitions of educational technology that have developed since the 1970's describe technology in many diverse aspects. Technology, as defined by Saettler (2004) and Gendron (1977), is "any systemized practical knowledge, based on experimentation and/or scientific theory, which enhances the capacity of society to produce goods and services, and which is embodied in productive skills, organization, or machinery" (p. 2). In a book published by the *Association of Educational Communications and Technology (AECT)*, educational technology is defined as "the study and ethical practice of facilitating learning and improving performance by creating, using, and managing appropriate technological processes and resources" (Januszewski, Molenda, & Harris, 2007, p. 1). Another definition by Muffoletto (1994) states, "Technology. . . is not a collection of machines and devices, but a way of acting" (p. 25). As the reader can see, educational technology is defined in many ways, making it difficult to establish a universal description and meaning of educational technology. For the purpose of this study, I will use the definition by Saettler (2004), coming

from the *Commission on Instructional Technology*: "the media born of the communication revolution which can be used for instructional purposes along side the teacher, textbook, and blackboard" and continues to explain it is "a systematic way of designing, carrying out, and evaluating the total process of learning and teaching" (p. 6).

Evolution of Educational Technologies

In *The Evolution of American Educational Technology*, author Paul Saettler (2004) illustrates the idea technology does not necessarily come in a hardware form, but can be seen as a "system of practical knowledge" (p. 1). Learning management systems like Schoology fit into this category as an online interface and platform, as opposed to a physical device, allowing faculty and students to engage innovatively with critical content knowledge, constructing knowledge through collaboration, and the accessibility of course materials at any time. The evolution of technology has developed significantly, and the introduction of technology in education created a change in an already complex system (Starkey, 2010a). In the last ten years in education there has been an increase in the usage of learning management systems, development of hybrid courses, and a growing number of distance learning online courses (Arispe & Blake, 2011; Georgouli, Skalkidis, & Guerreiro, 2008; Kim & Bonk, 2006; Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003; Wu & Lin, 2011; Young, 2002).

Examining Learning Management Systems, Hybrid Courses, and Distance Learning

Learning management systems (LMS), hybrid courses, and distance learning have components and qualities that help faculty and students in selecting online educational technologies. Some faculty specifically are looking for technologies that not only meet their students needs (increasing engagement, collaboration, new resources, etc.) but also align with their philosophical and theoretical stance in using educational technologies in their course.

As stated in the literature, faculty and students are looking for curriculum and course design, system tools and characteristics, expanding learning community, and personalization when deciding on learning management systems to use in a course (Wu & Lin, 2011, p. 1320). Wu and Lin (2011) provide additional criteria for these four dimensions: Curriculum Design: teaching materials updated in a timely manner, usefulness of teaching materials, richness and diversification of teaching materials, and practicality of teaching materials; System Design: ease of use, stability of network, and quality of e-learning platform; Learning Community: ease of communicating with other, ease of sharing data/information, and ease of sharing learning experience with others; Personalization: function of recording learning history, ability to plan for learning progress, flexibility in choosing learning content, and ability to assess learning performance; and Decision attribute: overall satisfaction (p. 1320). Therefore, in order for faculty and students to determine the appropriate system for their course, they must understand the characteristics of learning management systems, hybrid and distance learning technologies; what they can provide to enhance various courses; and what makes them valuable tools in higher education.

Learning Management System

Learning management systems (LMS) are the "most representative e-learning applications" (Georgouli, Skalkidis, & Guerreiro, 2008, p. 1) and are becoming more popular in higher education with the increasing enrollment in online education and distance learning programs (Kim & Bonk, 2006). A learning management system is more than a platform to deliver course content. Such systems may also offer ability to create course announcements, display assignments and grades, upload lecture notes and documentation, increase communication and collaboration, develop a learning community with unlimited

accessibility, peer learning, and create a transformative e-learning experience (Georgouli, Skalkidis, & Guerreiro, 2008; Kim & Bonk, 2006; Martin & Noakes, 2012; Nasser, Cherif, & Romanowski, 2011).

Hybrid Courses

A hybrid course, in some cases also referred to as blended learning course, is split in two pieces: part of the course is taught online and part is taught in a face-to-face session, alternating between the two methods (Arispe & Blake, 2011; Cowan, 2012; Foulger, Amrein-Beardsley, & Toth, 2011; Young, 2002). Additionally, Allen and Seaman (2010) explain hybrid courses have a "substantial proportion of the content delivered online, typically uses online discussions, and typically has a reduced number of face-to-face meetings" (p.5). In developing a hybrid course, the faculty member can design the course with the amount of face-to-face interaction and online interaction that best fits the needs of the students and meet the course goals and objectives. The faculty member may significantly reduce the face-to-face interaction (Allan, 2006) while combining the best teaching methods to form a superlative blended learning structure and experience for students (Lin, 2008). Moreover, learning hybrid courses concentrate on "optimizing achievement of learning objectives by applying the 'right' learning technologies to match the 'right' learning to the 'right' person at the 'right' time" (Lin, 2008; Graham, 2005). Embedded in an article published in 2002 from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, John R. Bourne, professor of engineering at Franklin W. Olin College, predicted "within five years, you'll see a very significant number of classes that are available in a hybrid fashion" (Young, 2002), a prediction that appears to be true given the "rapid development" of technology in education (Wu & Lin, 2011, p. 1318).

Distance Learning

As described by the American Society for Training and Development, distance learning "includes a wide range of applications and processes, such as web-based learning, computer learning, learning in virtual classrooms, and digital collaborations. In all of these activities, course content can be delivered via the Internet, via regional extranets, using audio/video technology, via satellite transmission, and using interactive TV and CD-ROM technology" (American Society for Training & Development (ASTD), 2012; Wu & Lin, 2011, p. 1318). As described in the definition provided by ASTD, you will notice a face-to-face component is not presented as a form of presentation. Distance learning provides course content that can be accessible at any location, at any distance from the instructor and provider.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge

One of the first philosophers in education to develop the concept of pedagogical content knowledge was Lee Shulman. In 1987, Shulman published *Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations of the New Reform,* which in detail describes pedagogical content knowledge and aids in making a connection to educational technology. Shulman (1987) explains that the foundation for teaching reform is based on "the idea of teaching that emphasizes comprehension and reasoning, transformation and reflection" and reform should be based on a "knowledge based for teaching – a codified or codifiable aggregation of knowledge, skill, understanding, and technology, of ethics and disposition, of collective responsibility – as well as a means for representing and communicating it" (p. 4). Teaching requires the basic skills, content knowledge, and general pedagogical skills, but not as

individual domains. Combining these ideas into one is how the formation of pedagogical content knowledge began (Shulman, 1987).

Matthew Koehler (2011) of *Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK)*, further explains and defines the idea of pedagogical content knowledge:

> PCK [pedagogical content knowledge] is concerned with the representation and formulation of concepts, pedagogical techniques, knowledge of what makes concepts difficult or easy to learn, knowledge of students' prior knowledge and theories of epistemology. It also involves knowledge of teaching strategies that incorporate appropriate conceptual representations, to address learner difficulties and misconceptions and foster meaningful understanding. It also includes knowledge of what the students bring to the learning situation, knowledge that might be either facilitative or dysfunctional for the particular learning task at hand. This knowledge of students includes their strategies, prior conceptions (both "naïve" and instructionally produced); misconceptions students are likely to have about a particular domain and potential misapplications of prior knowledge. (p.1)

In short, pedagogical content knowledge can be thought of as a blending of content and pedagogy. By blending these concepts together, we see an "understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction" (Shulman, 1987, p. 8). While teachers focus on the knowledge, their ideas, beliefs and values influence their practice as well (Cox, Webb, Abbott, & Blake, 2003). Along with the necessary extensive knowledge in the content area, teachers' beliefs, values and method effect how they incorporate technology into the curriculum, leading to the possibility of developing new pedagogies and methods.

Blended Learning Theory

As discussed previously, pedagogical content knowledge is a blend of content knowledge, pedagogical ideas and methods used to create a reform. As defined by Heinze and Procter (2004), blended learning is described in higher education as "the effective combination of different modes of delivery, models of teaching and styles of learning" (p. 1). Blended learning could be considered a form of pedagogical content knowledge that blends different learning methods to create a new teaching method and model. Similar to a hybrid course, blended learning can shift the amount of the face-to-face interaction as the amount of technology is increased, expanding education and learning opportunities (Kim & Bonk, 2006; Napier, Dekhane, & Smith, 2011) or continue with full face-to-face and add a technology component. In addition, blended learning involves a "planned combination of approaches, such as coaching by a supervisor, participation in online classes, face-to-face tutoring, visiting websites, consulting manuals, attending seminars, workshops, and online communities" (Georgouli, Skalkidis, & Guerreiro, 2008).

Schoology [3] supports blended learning as it creates a balance of in-class activity as well as out-of-class activity. Out of class, students are able to continue their education with one another in using an educational technology platform. Picciano (2009) in his study *Blending with Purpose: The Multimodal Model* recognizes "that because learners represent different generations, different personality types, and different approaches to learning, teachers and instructional designers should seek to use multiple approaches including face-to-face methods and online technologies that meet the needs of a wide spectrum of students"

[3] Schoology, created in 2009 by three Washington University graduates Jeremy Friedman, Ryan Hwang and Tim Trinidad, is a **"**learning management system (LMS) and social network that makes it easy to create and share academic content". More information can be found under *Purpose of Study*.

(p.1).

In higher education there has been a high demand and increase in the usage of blended learning in the classrooms (Banerjee, 2011; Deepwell & Malik, 2008; Napier, Dekhane, & Smith, 2011). Students are interested in the blended learning theory, specifically for the connections between faculty and students, multiple modes of learning, and increased interactivity (Banerjee, 2011; Napier, Dekhane, & Smith, 2011). For some students, the overall experience is overwhelmingly positive. There has been an increasingly high number (80%) of students engaged in using educational technology in a blended learning environment. Although students often are responsible for their learning and must take initiative as self-directed learners outside of the classroom, there are still high results in favor of this learning theory (Deepwell & Malik, 2008).

Faculty have different experiences as they have to adopt new tools and mindsets in using technology—especially those who have not used it before—and develop new teaching methods as they face the transformation of face-to-face to include technology (Banerjee, 2011; Napier, Dekhane, & Smith, 2011). Moreover, many faculty are unaware of how technology is embedded into the daily lives of students, causing faculty to reevaluate their teaching methods (Banerjee, 2011). In developing and using blended learning in the classroom, there has been an increase in the understanding of pedagogy, and back to our previous topic, pedagogical content knowledge. Some faculty believe it is beneficial for it is "helpful in drawing attention to what students are actually doing when they study, rather than to what they feel they should be doing" (Deepwell & Malik, 2008, p. 12). Further, some faculty believe that blended learning and using technology enables them to have a greater focus on the learning instead of the teaching, helping them to collaborate and actively learn

(Banerjee, 2011).

There is debate as to whether there is enough research available to understand the efficacy of blended learning theory as an effective or ineffective tool. In some cases researchers believe blended learning works better in smaller institutions (Banerjee, 2011; Deepwell & Malik, 2008). Regardless, it is believed that more and more faculty believes technology is important for their students on some level (Picciano, 2009).

Faculty and Student Experiences

While there is emerging research establishing how teachers integrate technology into their curriculum, there is little research about the experiences of faculty, especially those who are "digitally able," and how they integrate their knowledge of technology in their pedagogical teaching practice (Starkey, 2010a). Aside from the pedagogical stance and the blended learning theory, there are other ideas and experiences faculty have that may influence their decisions to utilize educational technology. In previous research, we find a variety of faculty experiences in using various educational technology tools in higher education classrooms. The varying experiences of faculty who have previously incorporated such technologies, or have not, includes faculty who are aware of the tools available and actively incorporate these instruments into their pedagogical knowledge and structure of their classroom (Auslander, 2010; Gredone, 2010), faculty who are aware of the tools available but lacked understanding how to utilize these tools (Green, 2010; Hull, 2010), and faculty struggling to make a connection between the tools available and their pedagogical stance (Starkey, 2010b).

Recent studies suggest that educational technologies enhance student learning when combined with effective teaching practices (Cox, Webb, Abbott, & Blake, 2003). In order to

fully discover if this notion is true, we must explore student experiences with technology. There is popular demand and rapid growth of online educational resources in the everyday lives of students (Bennett, Bishop, Dalgarno, Waycott, & Kennedy, 2012). Students utilize technology on a daily basis making educational technology and learning management systems a potential tool for student learning. Student experiences, as presented in previous research, includes students who embrace online resources to students who find using online educational resources to be overwhelming (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003; Rheingold, 2010). Furthermore, it is stated that students are more engaged when they are knowledge creators, in addition to being knowledge receivers, when there is selective use of the formal and the informal, when there is a variety of alternative venues for expression, when it is clear that what they learn will serve them elsewhere and is transferable to other contexts, when there is a sense of a learning community, when they help to steer the ship, and when story and narrative are used effectively (Brown, 2010). Engaging with student experiences allows educators to see if educational technologies like Schoology truly engage our students and enhance their learning, as the research is claiming.

V

Methodology & Research Design

This research is a case study of faculty and student experiences using learning management systems, specifically focusing on the use of Schoology. The study reveals ways in which faculty used learning management systems to create new transformative teaching and learning experiences. The various cases in this study warrant critical analysis of teaching and learning assumptions incorporated with using learning management systems and integration of learning management systems with face-to-face course design. Additionally, there is critical analysis of the unique student perspectives and distinctive perceptions of faculty illuminating experiences of using Schoology verses the university supported system eCollege, challenges and achievements in using a formal method of social media, and preferred method of instruction (face-to-face, online technology, blended learning). This research provides a deeper understanding and contributes to the body of knowledge on developing and implementing formal educational technology and learning management systems in higher education.

The researcher chose Schoology as a familiar tool that is used at North Texas university, but is not required or endorsed by the University. Schoology is a learning management system that the researcher has used previously and has an understanding how the system is used. The decision to use Schoology in this study was an independent choice by the researcher, not driven by the institution. The University purchases and supports the use of Pearson Learning Studio eCollege platform.

Conceptual Framework

Blended learning theory was chosen as the basis for the conceptual framework of this research study to examine the rapidly developing field of research on the use of technologies, specifically learning management systems, in teaching and learning. Blended learning emerged as a major theme in the literature, therefore making blended learning the ideal framework for this study. Along with this framework developed the need to examine faculty and students who have and have not used a learning management system as an approach to teaching and learning. In addition, the use of blended learning as a teaching and learning approach was also considered.

There are three ideas mentioned by Starkey (2010), which connect with the framework of this study:

1. "A complex system is not static; it constantly faces change through its structures, participants, parts, processes and knowledge
2. New knowledge will emerge through connections and in consideration of the experiences of the participants
3. A complex system is multileveled, ambiguously bound and can not be examined as isolated parts" (p. 62-63).

We must recognize the rapid growth of educational technology and prepare for the growth to continue. Through an understanding of teacher, student and the researcher's experiences, a qualitative research study was formulated to create new knowledge in an already complex world.

Case Study

The methodological approach for this research is case study. A case study, as defined by Starkey (2010) is a "methodological approach that involves systematically gathering enough information about a particular person or group and situation to permit the researcher to effectively understand how the subject operates or functions" (p. 63). A case study tells a story or stories about individuals, institutions, events, and so forth by capturing the experiences and looking for a deeper understanding for how it came about (Neale, Thapa, & Boyce, 2006). By using a case study methodology, the study can include complex details on the interactions and experiences with faculty and students using technology in education. In addition, Starkey (2010) reminds readers "case studies can penetrate situations in ways that are not always accessible through numerical analysis. The research methodology used aimed to construct meaning from data and observations while taking into account the complex relationships within the context in a holistic way." (p. 64, 66).

Research Questions

The initial overarching research question asks what are the experiences of faculty and students using Schoology in higher education, specifically looking for a deeper understanding for how and why faculty choose to or not to use technology as a learning approach. Through the literature review, many reoccurring themes appear, particularly blended learning theory. After reading much literature, it was clear how blended learning was a trend in the literature and a growing learning and teaching approach. The questions asked of the participants included educational philosophy, pedagogical knowledge, personal experiences with learning management systems, and preferred methods of teaching and learning, to name a few. Through the complex process of reading literature, collecting data,

and beginning to analyze the data, the primary research question became: *The experiences of faculty and students using Schoology in higher education: how do we expand teaching and learning beyond an already complex system with technology?*

Data Collection Process

Participants were invited to engage in a series of interviews to share personal experiences with learning management systems. Based on the literature review, the questions covered experiences with learning management systems (both Schoology and eCollege, as used at the University), teaching and learning methods, course and curriculum design, and paradigm shift of technology in education, to name a few. All participants were assured confidentiality and signed consent forms. The consent form requested two separate signatures from each participant: one for interview purposes and one for recording purposes. The recordings were used only for transcription purposes and will not be used for any other purpose. Participation in the study was completely voluntary for both faculty and students. There was no financial compensation or incentive for participation. Faculty and students were asked to participate in one to three interviews each.

The interviews were open-ended and semi-structured to align with answering questions in relation to technology in education. Faculty were interviewed first to gain a better perspective of questions for students and to maintain a list of potential student participants. Students were contacted after obtaining consent from the faculty member being interviewed. Each interview was scheduled for a minimum of fifteen minutes and a maximum of sixty minutes. Most interviews were conducted at the University.

Participants

Participants were selected from the College of Nursing. The University in 2012 reported 544 full-time faculty members, 9,725 students (8,456 undergraduate and 1,269 graduate), and the average student age at 21.8. The College of Nursing reported 75 full-time faculty and 984 students (724 undergraduate and 260 graduate). The researcher selected a gatekeeper from the College of Nursing to know which faculty members in the college have and have not used Schoology. The researcher identified a total of six participants for the study from the College of Nursing. Participants included two faculty members and four students (two undergraduate and two graduate). The participants were split: one faculty member and two students who have used Schoology, and one faculty member and two students who have not used Schoology. The participants were contacted individually to discuss the research and each agreed to participate. Faculty members teaching the courses served as the gatekeepers for the student participants. A total of ten faculty members were asked to participate, however only two faculty members were willing and agreed to participate in the research study. Reasons for this are unknown.

VI

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis was used to code all transcriptions, as described by Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2011). Atlas TI, a qualitative data analysis program, was utilized for the coding process. Following the coding procedure, key words, patterns, common ideas, and themes were identified in the collected data. The study was "designed to identify and examine themes from textual data in a way that is transparent and credible" (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011, p.15) while concentrating on conveying, as accurately and comprehensively as possible, the stories and experiences shared by each participant.

For this study, the data collected was coded and then sorted into categories and subcategories. The distinctive categories were established to display the diverse perceptions the participants shared for each question, creating a preliminary outline of the data and analysis. These categories and subcategories were assorted multiple times before formulating the order in which the data would be presented. The sorting was done numerous times to ensure the most accurate analysis of the data.

VII

Findings

The study initially began with a topic focused on the growing use of social media in higher education. Through much literature research, data collection, and analysis, the study focused more on student perceptions of learning and engagement during instruction incorporating the use of learning management systems. Additionally, the data reveals ways in which faculty used learning management systems to create new transformative teaching and learning experiences. The findings are organized to reveal the individual analysis of faculty perspectives and student perspectives, followed by an interweaving of all findings to create a more holistic story of all data collected.

Presuppositions

There are many assumptions about the uses of technology in education, including, but not limited to faculty are not tech-savvy and avoid technology; all students support technology and prefer technology is embedded into their courses; and technology is taking over higher education, leading institutions to eliminate face-to-face interactions. In addition to these assumptions, there are also suppositions referencing the learning process when embedding technology with course design and content.

As Kieran Egan (1978) said, presuppositions are often a "determining force over a range of curriculum issues" (p. 123), which may include embedding technology, such as learning management systems, within course design and content. The assumptions that drive the decision to use technology have a significant effect on the outcome. Assumptions about the preferred teaching and learning methods of their nursing students were clear in formal interviews.

I love technology. I believe my students do, too. It allows my students to complete their assignments at three o'clock in the morning if they want to. Using a learning management system enables my students be more in control and puts the responsibility on them, which they like. When it is a face-to-face teaching delivery method – "I'm in front of you, I'm the master or whatever you want to say - and I'm the one who you're going to listen to" – they don't like that.

Or …

I know the literature says we are moving away from face-to-face. I also know that's not what students want. When students have to choose between – in nursing at least – an online group activity or me teaching about it, they'll choose hands down me teaching about it rather than doing group activities.

Another example:

My students feel they can do what they want, when they want. That's the freedom that comes with using an online platform. As long as they have the skills, it's not a problem.

Or …

My students ask themselves, "Why am I paying to teach myself?" – the value of paying for an education contributes to the student desire for face-to-face. They want someone to stand in front of them and teach.

The two faculty members teach to the same body of students, however, each faculty member holds very different assumptions about the preferred teaching and learning methods of their students. Both faculty members use technology in their course. However, each has chosen a different learning management system platform for reasons, which will be explained further in the faculty experiences section. What cannot be overlooked in these two statements is the emphasis the second faculty member has for a face-to-face component. The second faculty member has, beginning this current semester, created a hybrid course using the blended learning theory, allowing the faculty member to integrate a learning management system with the already face-to-face course design. This course was designed under the assumption that students value face-to-face interaction and personal interactions along with an online learning platform.

Integrating Learning Management Systems with Face-to-Face

The foundation of the study comes from the notion of blended learning, a "planned combination of approaches, such as coaching by a supervisor, participation in online classes, face-to-face tutoring, visiting websites, consulting manuals, attending seminars, workshops, and online communities" (Georgouli, Skalkidis, & Guerreiro, 2008). By examining the assumptions revealed in the data, it is clear the faculty members have different teaching methods and ideas of how their students learn. In order to best serve their students, a blended learning method, or hybrid course, should be examined. In the data, both faculty and students expressed interest in a blended method. In fact, one faculty member created their own hybrid/blended course, which they were currently teaching at the time of the study.

Both faculty and students expressed several contributions a learning management system offers. A learning management system provides written communication through

various text formats. A student is able to express their thoughts in various written formats. In addition, this also gives students the ability to reflect on the written word to ensure accuracy in their expression prior to sharing with fellow peers. Students are able to complete tasks at a pace which best suits them, whether at three o'clock in the morning or nine o'clock in the evening. Discussion boards are available for students to continue dialogue and collaboration beyond the set classroom time. The student is on a virtual time frame, meaning they do not have a location to report to, but instead have tasks to complete each week on their own time. This encourages student initiative and self-taught instruction.

Furthermore, faculty and student participants disclosed various impacts a face-to face method delivers. In the presence of peers, students are able to express themselves using verbal communications, including visual cues and body language, to share idea in real time, and receive immediate feedback. Through group collaboration, students are able to interact immediately and develop interpersonal relationships with group members and classmates. This fast-paced model is more structured with standard meeting times and locations. Finally, students experience increased interactions with the faculty member, including physical office hours and the ability to received immediate responses.

Faculty and students prefer blended learning and hybrid courses. The ability to design a course with elements from both a learning management system and face-to-face model opens new doors for increased student engagement and construction of new knowledge and skills. A blended learning course provides interpersonal relationships and verbal communication as seen in the face-to-face model, however with the integration of a learning management system, discussion opens up beyond the traditional classroom setting. This allows for extended discussion, written communication, reflection, and new forms of

expression. As the level of connectivity and interactivity is amplified, interpersonal relations become more than a photo on a student profile and extend collaboration outside the classroom. Most importantly, as discussed in the following section, students develop a unique voice with the additional forms of expression available.

Student Experiences & Attitudes

Student participants support eCollege more than Schoology. Along with the faculty, students felt eCollege was more user friendly and a platform they were familiar with previously. In addition, students agreed they would use eCollege before Schoology. This was not only due to the faculty selection and University sponsorship, but students also felt eCollege was more manageable since the University supports and trains on the platform.

Although the course content developed is similar between an online model and face-to-face method, there is an increase in online courses being offered. However, while there has been an increase in online course offerings, students still prefer a face-to-face component integrated in the course framework, creating a blended learning environment. It is important to recognize the choice in preference is linked to the students preferred approaches to learning; differences in age and classification; and personal lifestyles including raising children. The external experiences and attitudes students possess impact a student's perception on the use of learning management systems and integration with face-to-face components.

The most significant experiences and attitudes in the data are related to three major themes: learning outside the classroom, increased student engagement, and personal experience. Students said what they valued is learning outside the classroom. A blended

learning environment allows students to engage in a face-to-face module while providing an online component accessible anytime, anywhere, much like a learning management system.

I believe I learn best when I am able to take what my professor says in class and make connections to [the content] outside of class. I can watch a TED talk at two in the morning about the same topic on my own, which is great!	*I love videos! I have to hear something to really grasp it. I can hear what my teacher says in class and then watch a video she or someone in the class posts to really grasp and reiterate what we are talking about. Especially if class time runs short.*
For me, it is about a global access to education. I can make new connections to research and have endless resources available. It helps me learn in a way that is best for me.	*We can continue learning outside of class. We are learning beyond the walls of our class on our own time – individually and collectively. I can also share my ideas and resources with my class and they do the same, which I really like.*

Learning management systems allow for students to access course content and related materials "beyond the walls" of the classroom, enabling students to become further engaged and construct knowledge in ways that best fit their learning needs and preferred learning approach. As conveyed through the student experiences, learning outside the classroom allows for diverse learning approaches. *I think that the teacher doesn't just stand in front of the class and lecture and be done. They have that online to go to post videos or have threaded discussions or to email the students – things like that where it's not just an in class*

restriction. You know they can email you about this or that or post things like doc sharing or post documents – all together. Through diverse learning approaches, students are able to develop knowledge, make new connections, and engage in new ways, which are not necessarily accessible through a traditional face-to-face model.

Embedding a learning management system within a face-to-face course increases student engagement, particularly with evolving connectivity. Students were more engaged in a blended method due to increased access to course content; amplified communications – verbal and written; expanded availability to resources and ability to exchange information; advanced social and human interactions; and developing interactivity in various learning approaches and devices.

I think that applying concepts is a key for me and also being provided materials and letting me manipulate them to my learning needs, basically. This helps me stay engaged and I think it improves the educational experience.	*I like a mix just so I know who I am talking with online and learning from - I think a mix is better. The social interaction is important for me and if I can interact with people during class and out of class, it helps me stay engaged.*
I think [a blended method] enhances the engagement. As long as we have a campus to go to I think that those students could see the differences of the learning aspect. The verbal and human interaction is important to me.	*Online classes are less personal. I like to actually see people, not just a picture from three years ago. I like how the wallflowers and outgoing students have their own place to express their ideas.*

A blended learning environment allows students to become engaged and develops connection unique to their preferred learning method. Students create connections by engaging in written and verbal communications, increased accessibility to resources, and most importantly by making connections to exchange information with one another as part of the class community. As students formulate pathways for exchanging and connecting, the unique voice from each student begins to emerge in various locales.

One of the most valuable pieces mentioned by the students was having a voice. Students found having an online resource opened more doors for them to have a voice, speak their minds, ask questions, carry on conversations, and express themselves, and provide a place where students can share knowledge at any time, including those who prefer not to speak in class to have a platform where they can share their thoughts at any time. Faculty also appreciated this notion.

As students share their personal experiences, express their thoughts, and share innovative mindsets, the student's ability to have and share their voice becomes vital to their engagement and learning process. A faculty and student conveyed parallel thoughts on the power of a student's voice in a blended environment.

Student	Faculty
With threaded discussions available everyone can and share their thoughts in whatever way they want. In class sometimes it's just the outgoing people who speak so you get to see more of everybody's opinion. You get to have that person-to-person	*It happens every semester where in a face-to-face class I don't hear from the student - they're back in the back and they're like a wallflower so to speak. But when they are writing in a chatting format or a discussion format they're very verbose and they're very*

interaction and see what others have to say when they post online instead. It's a more enriching experience because you might say something online that you wouldn't feel comfortable saying in a traditional classroom.	*insightful and it's just a delight to see that come out and them flourish in that kind of environment whereas in the class that's face-to-face they won't do that - and so that truly, that's the biggest advantage for online methodology,*

A poem captures the experience of both a faculty member and student during a situation as described above:

"What did you think about this?" the professor asked.
Silence. I sat in silence.
Silence. We sat in silence.
Waiting for someone else to start.
The professor stared at us asking herself
"Did they read?"
"Did they understand?"
Silence. I sat in silence.
What if I was wrong?
What if I didn't know?
Silence. We sat in silence.

"Respond to it tonight" she said.
Click. Click. Click.
The silence was broken.
I wrote my thoughts.
They wrote their thoughts.
Like a ripple in the water,
The comments kept flowing.

In order to provide a more enriching experience for students, there must be something in place to allow voice and reflection to come alive for all students. While a strictly online environment eliminates the personal experiences, there must also be a device in place to allow students the time to reflect before articulating their thoughts in a face-to-face format.

Through a collective analysis of the student experiences and attitudes, it is clear the many components that aid students in constructing knowledge using these tools through multiple modes of delivery. A blended environment layers many components together to structure new knowledge. As expressed by a student participant: *I think it does help me to kind of construct the knowledge in a more layered manner as far as compared to just reading the book. Sometimes it doesn't stick as well so if I see things in different places I am able to understand it better.*

Faculty Experiences & Attitudes

The faculty members share very similar experiences and ideas for learning management systems and blended learning integration, however they also expressed opposing views as well. Similar to the experiences of the students, both faculty believe and support the notion of student engagement and connectivity as key indicators for constructing knowledge. The structure of their course design and their pedagogical framework distinguishes the two faculty members from one another.

Faculty #1	*Faculty #2*
I have created a 50/50 hybrid/blended-learning course, which has turned into a unique situation that I really like. I think the students do too. They like not having to come to class all the time but they've got work to do and they know they have work to do and that's where they're doing their debates because I assign them to a team and	*I love technology with education. I truly believe that it has changed allowed for distant learning for those students who can't necessarily get to class, you know, who may have that disability, for who they never want to stop learning but they have the constraints of being at home. Not only that, I think as far as specific to the nursing profession, technology*

they're working on their debate argument, or their working on their threaded discussion or their working on some group project. I have students in that particular course do a lot of group projects.	*has made it possible for nurses to go back and get you know expand their knowledge base and go back and get additional degrees because they are on a twelve hour schedules.*

It is clear the faculty members support technology as a learning model, however, we need to pay close attention to the differences in how the faculty choose to utilize a learning management system as part of their course design. The first faculty member designed their course to be 50/50, meaning half the course offered online and half is offered face-to-face. The second faculty member has no face-to-face component embedded into their course design. Both faculty members designed their courses to meet the needs of their students but in different ways. The first faculty member strongly believes in the personal, face-to-face interactions: *I truly believe they hear the inflection of your voice, they hear the passion in your voice when you're talking about something you could never ever get across in online learning.* The first faculty member holds value in verbal communication with students for them to understand the content and construct new knowledge. The second faculty member believes in student accessibility: *I feel like it gives them that capability to go in at 3:00 AM and do their threaded discussions if they want to. I believe it has taken education to a totally different level that we all benefit from just because of the advances in it. It's a different style of teaching. It's a different way of getting students engaged. A lot of it is self-driven as well on the student's part. If they want to participate, how much they are willing to put in. I think it's made great*

advances in the world of education. Both examples are noble in meeting the needs of students. The question then becomes, which one is right? Both are valuable methods in their own ways.

When creating a blended learning course, it is up to the faculty member to determine the role of the teacher, the curriculum content, and course design. These three components are what create a solid blended learning course for students. The students described, from their experiences, how the role of the teacher is defined, especially in developing a blended learning course:

I think that the teacher doesn't just stand in front of the class and lecture and be done. They have that online to platform to continue engaging us and help us to continue learning all the time.	*The role of the teacher is kind of more of a guidance person and to help you learn the concepts in that – it's taken on a more adult learning platform in that the emphasis for college students. With the online environment you need to learn concepts in your own way and the teacher provides constructive criticism, feedback, etc.*

As stated before, Freire's (2001) statement provides a unique example of how the role of the teacher can shift when developing a blended learning course: "instead of a teacher, we had a coordinator; instead of lectures, dialogue; instead of pupils, group participants; instead of alienating syllabi, compact programs that were 'broken down' and 'codified' into learning units" (p. 81). As facilitators, faculty must be prepared to teach online; support learner needs particularly those who lack experience with technology; have greater flexibility in content delivery methods and design structure; developing the proper balance of time designated for

face-to-face and online interactions in addition to using those times meaningfully; and recognizing student individualism by recognizing the variety of approached to learning and the needs each student possesses. Furthermore, the faculty member must organize the proper characteristics from face-to-face and learning management systems to create the right amount of blended components to teacher the course content effectively. In doing so, the faculty member must also have an understanding of pedagogical content knowledge, which as we know from Shulman (1987) and Koehler (2011) is the ability to develop new comprehensions together as faculty and students, both in content and through technology. "A Teacher does not need just to know the contents but also to know *how* to teach the contents" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 108).

Teaching Philosophy

Faculty were interviewed first to gain an initial perspective, leading into finding student participants and developing questions geared toward the students and their learning. The faculty members interviewed consisted of one faculty member who has used Schoology as a learning platform and one who has not used Schoology as a learning platform.

The faculty member currently using Schoology during this study has recently begun teaching and primarily teaches online courses. The faculty member explains their teaching philosophy:

> *My teaching philosophy is really based on the principle that you have to have active engagement with respect for both parties. I've got to be willing as a teacher to provide for the student, to accept the evaluation, to accept the advice of the students as that, what's helpful, was not helpful, and build upon that. In return I ask that they provide me the same respect as the instructor that I am more of an expert in that*

area, now am I the complete expert? We all can learn I think constantly, we're never done learning, and that is part of my philosophy that you should never stop learning. Another part of it is my active engagement. I want the students to be actively engaged. I don't want it to be something where they're reading their book and not participating in the courses and not talking with other students and getting the feedback from others students and inquiring about other student's opinions.

It is clear from the teaching philosophy and interview with the faculty member that collaboration, community, accountability, and accessibility are highly valued. This can be done through a learning platform like Schoology. In addition, the faculty member revealed the ease of Schoology and the various components, which aided them in content delivery. These components include: discussion board and threaded discussion; document sharing; user friendly and easy navigation; and online grade books to allow students to monitor their progress in the course. The faculty member highly prefers a blended method or online method rather than a face-to-face course.

The second faculty member has not used Schoology as a learning platform. The faculty member is familiar with Schoology and has used it outside teaching, but only very briefly. When I asked the second faculty member to reveal their teaching philosophy, they explained it as follows:

My goals are to get them to do their best, and that's always been my goal for every student is that I expect and want them to give me their very, very best. My goals are related to them giving me their best and my goals are related to critical thinking. That's my passion is that I believe that we need to teach students to be better at thinking so I work very hard to make those "ah-ha!" moments where they realize "oh

my gosh, this makes sense, A+B does = C" and they spend so much time memorizing that they aren't able to put the pieces together to make the full picture. So that's my goals.

The faculty member strongly values making connections, collaboration, immediate feedback and reaction, and access to real world situations. Both faculty members value student interests, collaboration, constructing knowledge, and developing a content delivery model which best fits the needs of her students as part of their teaching philosophy. Blended learning fits in well with their teaching instructional method as they can structure the course in a way that best fit themselves and their students. Additionally, the faculty member must be prepared to alter the curriculum and course design to fit an online model and the needs of the students.

While this faculty member has not used Schoology as a learning platform previously, they did use Schoology for separate program. The faculty member felt Schoology was not user friendly and eCollege was a better resource. The faculty members mentioned they had previous training with eCollege, making it easier to use eCollege, training to use it, and is University sponsored. While the faculty members agreed the training would be transferable to Schoology, they found eCollege to be a better choice for their students.

Overall, it was revealed: blended learning is a preferred method by both faculty and students; faculty and student appreciated the collaboration and accessibility that come with using a learning management system; the University sponsored platform alters the perspective on learning management systems; user friendliness weights heavily into selecting a learning management system, face-to-face is still valuable in any situation; tools and

characteristics of learning management systems that work best; and a more detailed analysis regarding teaching and learning methods.

VIII

Discussion

A learning management system, such as Schoology or eCollege, is a valuable and widely used tool in blended learning environments. The faculty and student experiences exposed additional concepts worth considering and discussing. Three major themes emerged from the data: when selecting a learning management system to embed with a traditional face-to-face model, it is important to explore various characteristics of different learning management systems; consider the ongoing process and challenges of developing a blended learning environment; and prospective designs for future studies.

Schoology verses eCollege

There are various learning management platforms available, however in this study the students and faculty used Schoology and eCollege. Initially, the study was focused on the experiences of faculty and students, both who have and have not used Schoology as a learning management system. It became clear through the data collection process that while some faculty members may not use Schoology. The assumption was made that if a faculty member was not using Schoology, they were not using any learning management system. Instead, it is clear from the data most faculty use eCollege and very few utilize Schoology as a tool for their course design.

In comparing systems, both faculty and students agreed Schoology and eCollege are very similar. Both systems provide the ability to post grades, hold group discussions, and store documentation online for all class participants to have access to at any time. The key differences, as described by faculty and students, are platform layout and user friendliness.

Faculty and students found the layout of Schoology to be attractive and functional especially compared to the Facebook platform. However, there was an overwhelming response to the user friendliness of Schoology compared to eCollege. All participants expressed eCollege was much more user friendly than Schoology. While the Schoology platform is similar to Facebook, eCollege was easier to maneuver and understand.

The perception of eCollege as a user-friendly platform comes from the university providing training series on using eCollege effectively. The training not only demonstrates to faculty how to maneuver in the system, but also ways to incorporate eCollege into the courses and deliver content effectively through an online platform. Both faculty members agree the information is transferable to the use of Schoology, however the training is focused on eCollege, which encourages teachers to use the platform over other available platforms.

Views on Hybrid/Blended Learning

The human experience, including the way humans construct knowledge, is shaped by the tools being used, in this case, learning management systems. A blended learning method, or hybrid course, provide the opportunity to optimize learning by allowing these tools to be integrated in the face-to-face teaching method (Lin, 2008). Developing a blended learning course requires careful development of delivery mode, meaning selecting the proper learning management system; designing the course with the appropriate amount of face-to-face and online; and overcoming several challenges associates with a blended learning method.

Some challenges, as revealed in the data and literature, faculty experience when developing a blended learning course included the conflict between holding both virtual and physical offices hours; attending training to update technological skills in using the platform effectively; and how a faculty member should measure the appropriate amount of face-to-

face and the right amount of technology to meet students needs. The challenges may have a negative affect on the view of hybrid/blended learning courses, however from the data, a hybrid/blended leaning course is preferred by most.

Future Studies

John Dewey (2010) stated, "The most important attitude that can be formed is that of a desire to go on learning" (p. 48). While many aspects of educational technology, teaching, and learning have been revealed through this study, there continues to be a large body of knowledge left unexplained waiting to be explored. Some examples include, but are not limited to a deeper understanding or knowledge constructed through technology; course development and curriculum design for blended learning, specifically looking for a better understanding of how to judge the right amount of face-to-face and online methods; a large scale research investigating the experience of faculty and students using a blended learning method; and taking a deeper look into the relationship between faculty teaching philosophies and the use of educational technology.

IX

Conclusion

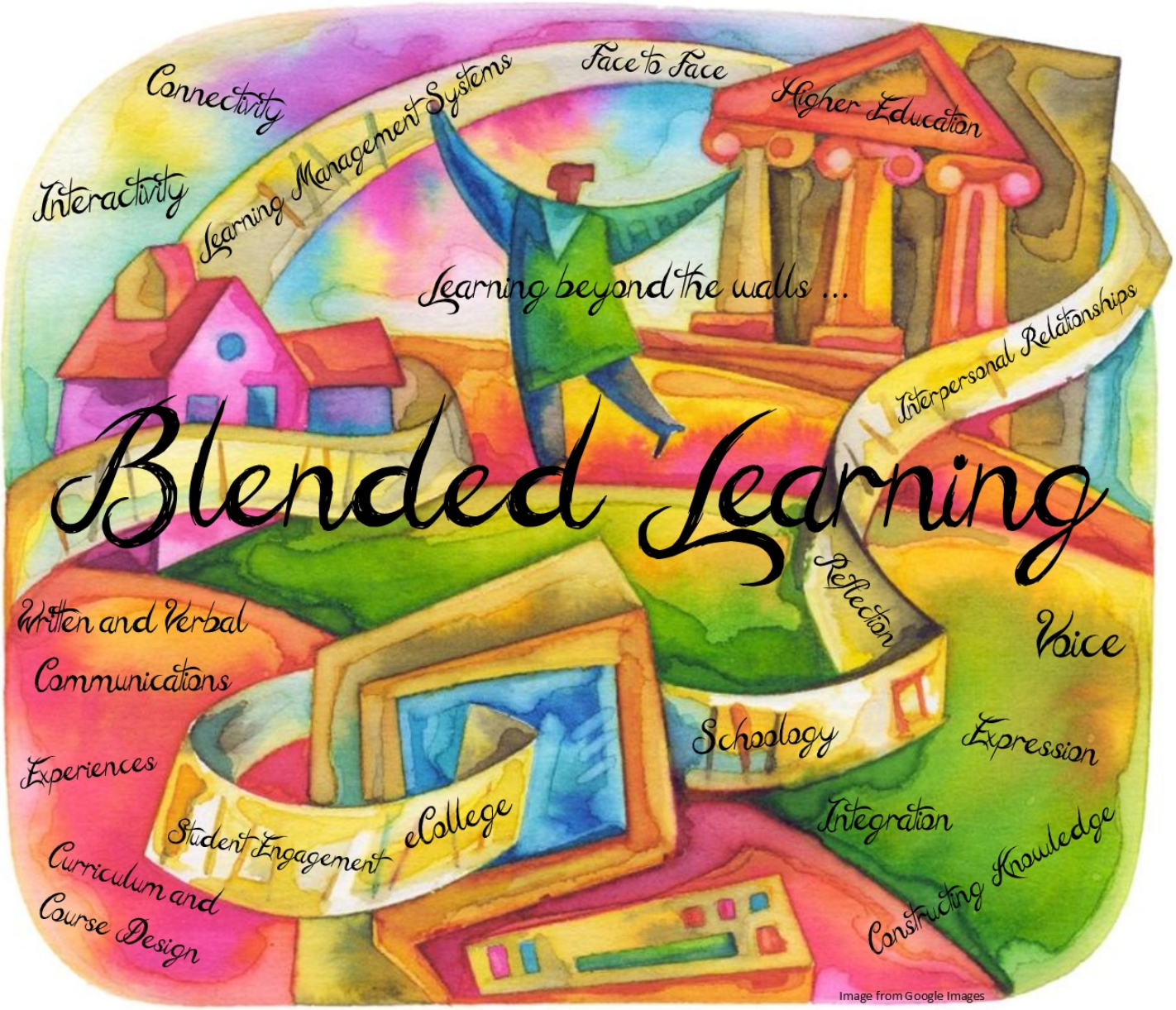
While there is an increase in technology in education, specifically higher education, face-to-face instruction is too valuable to be eliminated. In years to come, I predict a significant increase in the number of blended learning courses with varying degrees of the amount of face-to-face and online interaction.

The significance, for faculty and students, also valued constructing knowledge in a blended learning environment, and the many opportunities for course and curriculum development. Through these experiences, faculty and students were able to develop connectivity, interactivity, written and oral communications, reflection, voice, expression, and most importantly increased engagement. These characteristics emerged from the many experiences shared by faculty and students, which also serve as the qualities of a blended learning environment. While Schoology and eCollege are both esteemed learning management systems, they are equal in many ways in the services they provide. In the end, it is up to the instructor to use their pedagogical content knowledge to formulate the proper blended method to best demonstrate the content. Through blended learning, education can expand by shifting the paradigm in allowing faculty and students to construct a learning environment that best fits the student and content delivery.

In Figure 1 below, the graphic display captures the story being shared and expressed in this study. This image demonstrates how learning and teaching occur beyond the walls of the classroom or the home. An individual is located in the center surrounded by their home, their institution, and technology. Three separate locations yet all intertwined by the qualities

and characteristics that create a blended environment, amalgamating the various components together to construct a depiction of blending learning.

Figure 1: Blended learning graphic display



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ABSTRACT

BLENDED LEARNING: TAKING TEACHING & LEARNING BEYOND THE WALLS

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This research is a case study of the faculty and student experiences using learning management systems, specifically focusing on the use of Schoology. The study will reveal ways in which faculty used learning management systems to create new transformative teaching and learning experiences. The various cases in this study will warrant a critical analysis of teaching and learning assumptions incorporated with using learning management systems (LMS) and integration of LMS with face-to-face course design. Additionally, there will be a critical analysis of the unique student perspectives and the distinctive perceptions of faculty illuminating experiences of using Schoology verses the university supported system eCollege, challenges and achievements in using a formal method of social media, preferred method of instruction (face-to-face, online technology, blended learning).

Keywords: blended learning, hybrid course, online education, student experiences, faculty experiences, learning management system, educational technology, higher education, Schoology

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