

The Challenges of Supporting Staff and Adult Students in an eLearning Environment

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INTRODUCTION Many New Zealand tertiary providers—including teacher education institutions—are currently developing new online programmes to help keep their competitive edge in an increasingly global environment. As eLearning experiences and research grow and mature globally, more “universal attributes of quality online courses” (McLoughlin, 2003, p. 5) are emerging. Much is made of the “as good as face-to-face” (McDonald, 2002) or “no-significant difference” (Russell, 1999, as cited in McDonald, 2002) phenomena, where online learning experiences are said to match or even surpass their on-site counterparts.

The writer’s own initial experiences as an adult eLearner belied this. Frustration, anger, panic, anxiety, and despair were all experienced. These were related to the new technologies and suitable computer access, the lack of person-to-person contact, uncertainties of what was expected or the standard required, and a fear in case something vital on the website was missed. Other problems included concern at the amount of time it was taking—particularly to read all the discussion postings (plus official readings with their hyperlinks that hyperlinked

again), seeing others posting contributions on the very first day, and adjusting the rest of life to fit in with study.

Did anyone else ever experience feelings like these? Did others in the online class feel similarly? As a community of strangers, the writer suspected they were hesitant to admit to anything of the sort. The turning point came when someone recommended reading Hara and King’s (1999) article on student frustrations with a Web-based course. The news was out! The class voiced it, and uncovered a chorus of agreement from relieved others. Somehow in the sharing the students found themselves empowered to continue on more strongly.

As the institution in which the writer works is at an emergent stage of translating teaching and counselling courses into a mixed mode model, she suddenly became aware of the possible needs of a new group of students with whom there had been no prior contact—the flexi student body. None had ever sought help even though, as Learning Centre Coordinator, the writer’s name and contact details were in all their study guides. Were they experiencing the same difficulties as she had in her online class? All the flexi courses contained one or two

face-to-face, on-site block courses during the semester, which may have made a significant difference, but there were online components—usually threaded discussions—in between. How were the students faring? Did they need help? During the preparation of translating courses into a more flexible model, were there lessons to be learned from the literature and from pioneering colleagues that could help inform the work?

The writer set out to explore the following questions:

- What areas of learning online do adult students struggle with most? How do they face these challenges?
- How can tertiary e-educators and e-support staff better serve online students?
- Do students know how and from whom to access help—and do they? How well “set up for success” do they feel?
- Do adult eLearners in practice experience all or many of the supposed advantages of online learning—are they aware of what these are?
- How self-aware are adult eLearners?
- Is there an “ideal” eLearner profile, as some writers suggest?

METHOD A questionnaire was developed in order to gather data pertaining to students’ experiences of learning online (see Appendix 1). Issues to be recorded included if and where students accessed help, some common areas of struggle and ways in which these might be ameliorated, students’ metacognitive awareness of themselves as learners, and recommendations for ways in which future online students could be better supported. (Several sections of the questionnaire are subsumed into these broader parameters in the analysis).

The questionnaire was sent to current and past flexi students of the writer’s institution. Only thirteen students fell into this category, so the potential pool of respondents was small from the outset. All were practising teachers.

EXPLORING THE LITERATURE

Accessing Help

The notion of equal opportunities for all students—whether on or off campus—is at the heart of Treaty of Waitangi obligations for education providers in New Zealand. Tertiary institutions typically give online students information on how to contact academic and support personnel for help when needed—people such as their course lecturers (often the first “port of call”), library personnel, tertiary learning advisers, Web-based help, IT Helpdesk personnel (Lindeman, 2000) and, at a more personal level, health and counselling services. Students can also access libraries in their own locality and Web-based materials from other tertiary institutions, or talk to family members, friends, or work colleagues.

Areas of Frustration

As e-education is becoming more established and the honeymoon period is over, more writers are acknowledging areas of frustration for eLearners (e.g., Cifuentes & Shih, 2001; Hara & King, 1999; Hase & Ellis, 2001; Klemm & Snell, 1995). Many of these link to key areas such as issues with computers, the learning platform, or technology; course design and practice; relating in the online environment; and students’ own fears and struggles.

1. **Computers, the learning platform, or technology.** Frustrations noted in these areas include difficult or slow computer

access; technical problems with the student's own computer (Hase & Ellis, 2001); an unreliable learning platform; difficulties searching for or finding relevant information on the Internet, including sites that do not open (Hara & King, 1999) or that are firewall protected in the student's workplace; security issues relating to intellectual property, privacy, and confidentiality (Rigden, 2001); inadequate computer skills, including a slow typing speed (Hara & King, 1999; Klemm & Snell, 1995); and a general sense of disorientation in the unfamiliar environment of cyberspace (Bilotta, Fiorito, Iovane, & Pantano, 1995).

2. Course design and practice. Most difficulties relating to course design seem to focus on insufficiently explicit structure or a lack of clarity of tutor expectations (National Centre for Vocational Education Research, n.d.), student difficulties understanding online instructions or the course materials, and the inflexibility of course schedules (Hara & King, 1999). Students also complain about the high levels of reading required (Rigden, 2001), both official reading and that generated by multiple discussion postings.

Difficulties with course practice frequently revolve around relating to the lecturer, particularly if feedback on assignments or answering of questions is infrequent or tardy (Hara & King, 1999).

3. Relating in the online environment. Several writers note student struggles with relating in the online environment. The lack of nonverbal or visual cues in discussions (Palloff & Pratt, 2001) can lead to misunderstandings, "flaming" (where a student vents their frustration in written form), and online conflict. Others note that discussion contributions can be

superficial, sluggish, and unsatisfying (Klemm & Snell, 1995), or that they can be hijacked by one or two contributors (Jonassen, Howland, Moore, & Marra, 2003). If the class is small and classmates are lazy, since discussions are in essence social and collaborative, the learning experience is lessened for all (Klemm & Snell, 1995). Not knowing one's lecturer or classmates beforehand can also pose problems for some eLearners. In a campus setting, student life includes a rich social aspect that can be entirely missing for the online learner (Rigden, 2001), who can find their study experience very lonely (Trewern & Lai, 2001).

4. Students' own emotional fears and struggles. Increasingly, the affective side of online learning is being acknowledged in the literature. Apart from loneliness, other key areas of challenge include poor personal time management, resulting in last-minute panic; difficulties juggling home, work, and study commitments; distractions in the student's workspace (Rigden, 2001); feelings of not coping (Hara & King, 1999); and fears that it will all take too much time, particularly the reading.

Students respond in various ways to these challenges. Some pull out before their course officially starts or drop out in the first few weeks. Some begin to withdraw, but are drawn back in by the timely intervention of an observant tutor. Others have an online outburst. Still others seek help inside or outside official channels.

Advantages of Online Learning

At the other end of the spectrum, advocates of learning online are quick to point out ways in which it can give superior learning experiences to face-to-

face classrooms (e.g., Kassop, 2003; McDonald, 2002; Milne, 2002; Palloff & Pratt, 2001; Russell, 1999, as cited in McDonald, 2002; Twigg, 2001). Numerous advantages mentioned include the freedom students have to express themselves more fully, deeply, and reflectively in discussions (Kassop, 2003; Klemm & Snell, 1995), since their asynchronous nature allows more time for reflection and reading before posting (Meyer, 2003); a greater degree of sharing resources, cooperation, and collaboration between classmates, allowing students to learn from each other more (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996; Kassop, 2003; Klemm & Snell, 1995); greater flexibility to fit in with students' work, family responsibilities, or the rest of life (Palloff & Pratt, 2001); improvement in students' written skills (Meyer, 2003); the provision of a more equitable environment, with the elimination of power differentials between students or between students and lecturers (Palloff & Pratt, 2001); a helpful focus on the message rather than the messenger, with all having equal "air-time" (McDonald, 2002); speedier and more regular feed-back from course tutors (Rigden, 2001); opportunity for learning styles to be creatively catered for (Palloff & Pratt, 2001); and greater levels of interest, and even, potentially, higher grades (Rigden, 2001).

Self-Awareness as a New Online Learner

Metacognitive learning, including that experienced in the online environment, is an area of growing interest in educational circles (e.g., Decker Collins, 1994; Gay, 2002; Hacker, 1998; Huitt, 1997; Livingstone, 1997; Marshall, 2003; Soellner, Thrift, Wildhagen, & Threet, 2002). Some writers have identified what they see

as common traits of successful online learners, and the current project sought to discover if the students it surveyed aligned themselves with many of these. The results could provide interesting background information for any students who sought learning support help. Not every student is successful in an online environment, and if students did not identify readily with many of the indicators, it could suggest that they might require more support. Equally, it was felt that becoming more aware of the kind of learner they are could help students in the learning process.

Commonly acknowledged indicators of a successful online learner, and consequent successful learning experience, include:

- Age—not a school leaver (Palloff & Pratt, 2003);
- A preference for writing rather than speaking (Palloff & Pratt, 2003);
- Being fairly computer literate (Meyer, 2003)—having access to a computer and modem on a high-speed connection and having the ability to use them (Palloff & Pratt, 2003);
- Being strongly reflective (Palloff & Pratt, 2003);
- Free choice in doing the course as opposed to it being a requirement (Palloff & Pratt, 2001);
- Good collaboration and cooperation skills (Palloff & Pratt, 2001; Jones, 2000);
- Good thinking skills (Palloff & Pratt, 2003);
- High personal expectations (Palloff & Pratt, 2001)—being motivated to learn for the sake of it (Jones, 2000; Meyer, 2003);
- The ability to cope with the lack of auditory or visual cues (Palloff & Pratt, 2003);
- The ability to read strategically (Decker Collins, 1994);

- The ability to work independently in a self-disciplined way (Jones, 2000; Meyer, 2000), including asking for help as required (Palloff & Pratt, 2003);
- Life transformation as a result of doing the course (Palloff & Pratt, 2003).

FINDINGS As mentioned earlier, only thirteen students had participated in the flexi courses to date at the writer's institution. Of the thirteen, three had only just started their courses and felt their experiences were too minimal to be of use. Two others promised to respond but never did; four made no contact, despite receiving the original email, a mailed letter, and an email reminder; the remaining four responded fully. The responses of these few gave helpful indicators of areas e-educators need to consider further, both in terms of student support and course design.

Accessing Help

Questionnaire results showed that the most common ways of accessing help were from the course lecturer(s) and family members or friends. Three of the four respondents had accessed local libraries, while two had accessed the institute's library personnel. Only one had accessed the library's e-journal databases or the institute's Helpdesk, or sought help from their own or other institutions' online learning support. None had contacted the institute's Learning Centre Coordinator or any health or counselling personnel.

Areas of Frustration

Multiple areas of frustration were identified. One identified by all was that of juggling study with work and home commitments. Also high on the list was not knowing their classmates, and

having no social interaction with them; finding relevant information on the Internet; feelings of not coping, and panic at having too much to do in too short a time. Others commented on the frustration caused by the learning platform not functioning or technical problems with their own computers, plus a sense of disorientation in the unfamiliar environment of cyberspace. Conflicts with their other work time, superficial or unsatisfying discussions, fears that their study would take up too much time, and loneliness also featured.

Other areas identified by only one respondent—but causing extreme frustration—included not knowing exactly what to do on a week-to-week basis, discussions being hijacked by others, and not knowing the course lecturer.

Ways in which respondents combated frustrations included discussing aspects of the paper with colleagues or giving up temporarily, coming back later, continuing slowly on, gaining confidence as assignments came back, and prayer.

Respondents made suggestions as to how some of these frustrations could be eliminated or ameliorated. Two suggested getting together as a group at the start of the course. This would help the sense of connection, so they felt they knew who their lecturer and classmates were. One suggested that each week the tutor post a message saying what students should be doing that week and in what order.

Another suggestion was for materials to be sent out earlier prior to the course start, allowing students time to become more familiar with course requirements and the technology and learning platform involved. This student also suggested

that due dates for first assignments should take into account the steep technological learning curve for many new eLearners, should be of lower value, and perhaps should be later than in a campus-based class. Two suggestions related to course information: more information about the various subject options was asked for, including letting students know in advance if exams were part of the assessment process, allowing those who wished to avoid them. Knowing earlier when intensives were scheduled would also allow for the booking of cheaper flights. One student suggested that a detailed list be given of what the Learning Centre could offer students right at the start of the course.

Advantages of Online Learning

Respondents to the questionnaire agreed unanimously with the advantage of flexibility of timing to fit with the rest of life. All agreed that the online environment allows more time for reflection, and that the focus is on the message rather than the messenger. Beyond that, they did not agree.

Three agreed that the online environment, which is very text-focussed, had helped their written skills. They also felt they had more access to their course lecturer(s) and had more "air time" in discussions than they might have had otherwise.

Respondents were divided equally as to whether they felt personally welcomed and acknowledged in the online context, whether feedback from their tutors had been faster than in a campus-based course, or whether power differentials were eliminated. Again, opinion was

divided as to whether more of their learning had come from classmates or whether their learning style was catered for.

One respondent felt they had expressed opinions they would have been more hesitant to express in a face-to-face context; another believed they ended up with a higher grade! Only one student felt the course was more interesting because of its online dimension, or that discussions were deeper or more thoughtful as a result of being asynchronous.

None felt the online environment allowed them to express themselves more fully or reflectively, or that their discussions were more stimulating than in a face-to-face context. None experienced a greater level of cooperation, collaboration, or sharing of resources between classmates.

Self-Awareness as a New Online Learner

All respondents agreed they had freely chosen to do the course(s), had high personal expectations, and their lives had been transformed in the process.

Three felt they were able to cope without the visual or auditory stimuli of face-to-face learning, were highly motivated to learn for the sake of it, and were cooperative and collaborative learners with good thinking skills. They willingly sought help as required. They felt they were self-motivated, self-disciplined, and reflective, open to share from their own lives with their classmates. These respondents also acknowledged they were already fairly computer literate, with access to a computer and modem on a high-speed connection.

Only one in four identified as preferring to communicate through writing rather than speaking, that they could work with a minimum of structure, or that they were strategic in their reading practices.

When asked what else they felt contributed to successful online learning, metacognitive responses linked primarily to confidence—that they could do the course successfully and had something positive to offer. A good sense of humour and a supportive family were also identified.

In sharing ways in which they recognised they had grown as learners through doing these courses, respondents said they had learned they could successfully complete a paper in this style of learning, were able to discipline their time effectively and work independently, and functioned better when encouraged, while acknowledging that constructive criticism of their work had also contributed to their personal and professional growth.

In sharing their awareness of how they liked to learn, three said they preferred to learn face-to-face, as they liked talking and having things explained to them.

Respondents expressed awareness that, after completing the course, they have become very familiar—some perhaps for the first time—with using email, chatrooms, and the discussion board, and that they had appreciated addressing and exploring issues one-to-one via email with their lecturer, something they could probably not have done in a face-to-face setting. The course(s) had also helped them get back into study and professional reading.

DISCUSSION

Accessing Help

Respondents were very grateful for the level of help given by their course lecturer(s). The students mentioned they were very available and helpful, responding quickly and personally to requests. The respondents also appreciated their helpful and clear instructions. Online learning often gives students far more personal access to lecturing staff than they could expect in a campus-based course (e.g., Jones, 2000).

Friends, flatmates, or family members seemed to help mostly on the technology front, since it was unfamiliar to some, or with academic writing. The helpfulness of the librarian was also mentioned, both in accessing materials and for the detailed explanation of how to use a major e-journal database. The local online Learning Centre came in for praise, although one respondent asked that PowerPoint scripts also be provided in Word for ease of printing.

These responses showed the initiative taken by these students in seeking help where they felt they could find it.

None of the flexi students had ever contacted the writer in the Learning Centre, but it may be that as she had never met any of them, they had no face to link to the name in their book. They may have preferred to use the Learning Centre materials online since they were becoming more proficient in that milieu and could access them from home.

One way in which this study has changed the writer's approach is that she now plans to suggest a meeting with flexi students when they come on site, so

they can see the human side of the Learning Centre and hear more about how they might be helped. In addition, producing a small booklet of information on the Learning Centre resources and services is felt to be very worthwhile.

As a result of the study, course leaders appear to be more aware of the writer's willingness to be involved with this new group of students, and may refer questions to her that they would previously have tried to answer themselves, thus saving time.

Areas of Frustration

Since the respondents were all in responsible jobs, it was unsurprising to hear of the challenge of juggling study and other life commitments. It would appear that these students were very relational, since the lack of social contact or knowledge of classmates and tutor featured markedly in their struggles. This is perhaps not surprising since the teaching profession is a strongly relational area of work. It could also result from unfamiliarity with the online environment; it takes time to adjust to relating in a different way from anything previously experienced.

As mature adults, these students handled the challenges positively. It could be speculated that younger students might tend to give up more easily, hence the need for tutors to be alert to vanishing students and intercept quickly if they can, coming alongside to encourage them to push through the barriers.

In future, the writer would encourage new online students to keep a personal reflective journal or to share their feelings and struggles more openly in

a weblog setting (Blood, 2000; Cross, 2002). Personal experience suggests it may be that sharing how they feel will help bond a class, relieve or diffuse the negatives, and encourage an atmosphere of support and trust between classmates.

Advantages of Online Learning

It was of no surprise that the noted advantage to these students was that of flexibility of time. After all, that is a key reason why many eLearners choose to take online courses. All four respondents were either schoolteachers or principals, not necessarily working full time, so time flexibility would be an essential ingredient for them.

What was surprising, however, was that they did not feel their online experiences allowed them to express themselves more fully or reflectively than in a face-to-face environment. They did not all know each other prior to doing the course(s) together. Perhaps the intensive section of their courses included some highly stimulating discussions. Perhaps the tiny numbers in some of the online classes meant there were too few people with whom to have a satisfying discussion, in contrast to the size of most on-site classes. Perhaps the fact that all were experienced professionals used to speaking up meant they were well used to being assertive in group settings anyway. Perhaps the small group of respondents would be atypical of a larger sample.

Self-Awareness as a New Online Learner

All the respondents seemed to be very self-aware, although only three out of the four identified with most of the common indicators for successful online learning. Other comments by the fourth

student would seem to indicate a higher level of struggle with isolation, feelings of inadequacy, and stress. If future students used a weblog to share thoughts and feelings of this nature, teaching or support staff would be able to recognise those struggling earlier and ideally provide coaching. Research shows (e.g., Ryan, 2001) that online learning can have a very high attrition rate, and early intervention and prompt feedback are key elements in helping keep students in touch.

CONCLUSIONS The results suggest tertiary e-educators and e-support staff can better serve online students. The following strategies are proposed:

- Alert course lecturers to the presence and willingness of academic support services to get alongside their distance or online students, and encourage them to pass on relevant enquiries. It seems students may not always know all those who could help them in their studies.
- Ask a learning adviser and librarian to take part in face-to-face intensives, so students can put faces to names for academic support.
- Create a booklet for all new online students listing the areas of help available through the Learning Centre, library, and other student support services. This should include advice on how to search the Internet and use library databases.
- Have all online learning support materials available in Word (even if also in PowerPoint) for ease of printing.
- Encourage prompt intervention by academic or support staff to help encourage and motivate vanishing students.
- Make all expectations very explicit for eLearners in the course design process to help them feel safe and also to enhance their sense of being set up for success.

- Send out all course materials in good time prior to the course start to allow students time to peruse them, organise their time expectations, and arrange any travel requirements.
- Allow students sufficient time to explore the learning platform before a course starts.
- Academic staff should consider carefully the timing and weighting of online assessments to allow students to familiarise themselves with the new environment, and not disadvantage them over face-to-face students.
- Arrange a face-to-face intensive early on in the course to help online learners on many social and affective fronts.
- Encourage new online students to share their feelings and struggles in a shared weblog setting or a personal reflective journal. These help students' self-awareness as learners and the class bonding process. Given time and sufficient experience, they probably will experience many of the known advantages of learning online.
- Above all, never underestimate the importance of affirmation and encouragement. As with face-to-face students, online learners thrive in a positive, can-do environment.

The writer says:

I feel that, through this study, my own "wrestling" has resulted in a much greater depth of understanding of online learning processes and "trouble spots." I have a much greater ability to support students unfamiliar in the online environment and will work towards translating my own courses in a way that will activate student interest and promote success.

APPENDIX 1

Affective and metacognitive aspects of online learning: An online questionnaire

Thank you for your willingness to take part in this questionnaire! Your feedback will be most helpful in informing the support of and delivery to future online students.

THE ORIENTATION PROCESS FOR ONLINE LEARNING

- What was involved in your Orientation to online learning?
- What would have helped you adjust more easily?
- What if anything was included that you feel could have been left out?
- Did you feel you had adequate experience with computers prior to starting this course?
YES / NO
- Did you feel you had adequate time to explore the software prior to starting this course?
YES / NO
- Did you feel objectives were stated sufficiently in detail and clearly?
YES / NO

ACCESSING HELP WHEN NEEDED

Where did you go to access academic, technical or personal help when you felt you needed it?

Please indicate your answer in **bold**, by underlining, or by deleting as applicable.

- Course lecturer(s)? YES / NO
- Family member or friend? YES / NO
- Institute HELPDESK? YES / NO
- Institute Library personnel? YES / NO
- Learning Centre Coordinator at Bethlehem Institute? YES / NO
- Learning Centre information online? YES / NO
- Library e-journal databases? YES / NO
- Local doctor or counsellor? YES / NO
- Other libraries? YES / NO
- Other tertiary institutions' support systems? YES / NO
- Reflect briefly on why you went where you did for help.

- The discussions were at a deeper level and more thoughtful than f2f would usually be YES / NO
- The focus is on the message, rather than the messenger YES / NO
- There was a greater sharing of resources by classmates YES / NO
- There was greater cooperation between classmates YES / NO
- Comment on the role, presence or absence of humour in your online learning experience —was there more or less than f2f?
- Why do you think this was?

FRUSTRATIONS EXPERIENCED

Please tick [√] any or all of the aspects listed below that you found frustrating in your online learning experience. Then place another tick [√√] beside the **five** aspects that you would rank as the most frustrating of all.

- Asked for help was too slow in coming
- Blackboard didn't work
- Computer access was difficult or slow
- Computer problems of a technical nature
- Conflicts with my work time
- Cultural inappropriacies
- Didn't know any of the other classmates
- Didn't know course lecturer beforehand
- Difficulties juggling study with home and work commitments
- Difficulties searching for/finding relevant information on the Internet, including sites that wouldn't open
- Difficulty with issues of privacy and/or confidentiality
- Discussion contributions were superficial and unsatisfying
- Discussions were "hijacked" by one or two contributors online
- Discussions were sluggish
- Expectations were not clear enough
- Expense of Internet access
- Experienced breaches of security
- Experienced conflict online with other classmates
- Fear that it would take up too much time

- Feelings of not coping—(can you identify what it was you felt you weren't coping with?)
- Found it too lonely
- Had difficulty accessing web materials due to firewalls
- Had difficulty understanding online instructions
- Had difficulty understanding the course materials
- Had difficulty with the level of student-centredness
- Inadequate computer skills
- Inflexibility of the course schedule
- Insufficient lecturer feedback
- Insufficient structure given
- Issues of intellectual property
- Lack of non-verbal cues in discussions—hard to know if others were serious, teasing, mischievous, hurtful . . .
- Lack of social interaction with other students
- Lecturer feedback was too slow
- Other students' laziness lessened the learning experience
- Panic—too much to do in too short a time
- Poor personal time management
- Sense of disorientation in the unfamiliar environment of cyberspace
- Slow at typing
- Too many distractions in my work space
- Too much reading

- How did you respond to these frustrations at the time?

- How do you think any/all of these could be eliminated or ameliorated next time?

Feel free to comment further on any individual issues if you wish.

SELF-REFLECTION AS AN ONLINE LEARNER

Which of these are true for you? Please indicate your answer in **bold**, by underlining, or by deleting as applicable.

- A collaborative learner YES / NO
- A non-school leaver YES / NO
- A strategic reader YES / NO
- Able to cope without the sight/sound stimuli of f2f learning YES / NO
- Fairly computer literate YES / NO
- Flexible; can work with a minimum of structure YES / NO
- Have access to a computer and modem on a hi-speed connection and the know-how to use them YES / NO
- Have good thinking skills YES / NO
- Have high personal expectations YES / NO
- Highly motivated to learn for the sake of it YES / NO
- My life has been changed/transformed through this (online) course YES / NO
- Prefer to write rather than speak YES / NO
- Reflective YES / NO
- Self-disciplined, able to work independently YES / NO
- Self-motivated YES / NO
- Share freely with others about my life, work . . . YES / NO
- Take responsibility for sharing, and asking for help if problems arise YES / NO
- Tend to be quieter orally in a f2f class YES / NO
- Wanted to do this course (as opposed to being required to do it) YES / NO

- What other characteristics do you think contribute to successful online learning?

THINGS LEARNED THROUGH THIS PAPER

- What things do you feel you have learned through this course about
 - Yourself?
 - The way(s) in which you like to learn?
 - Online education?
- What things that were new to you at the beginning of the paper now feel automatic?

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