

**BLENDED TEACHING: IS IT  
A BLESSING OR A  
BURDEN? A CASE OF E-  
TUTORS IN AN ODEL  
UNIVERSITY IN SOUTH  
AFRICA**

**DR THEMBEKA SHANGE**

**DUBLIN**

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**UNISA**   
university  
of south africa

# BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

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Involvement as e-tutor

Student support project

Poor interaction between e-tutors and lecturers

# ODL/ ODEL CONTEXT

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- UNISA (2008) defines ODL as a learning model that endeavors to bridge the time, geographical, economic, social, educational and communication distance between the institutions and the students, the academics and the students, the learning materials and the students and amongst the students themselves (Ngubane-Mokiwa and Letseka, 2015)
- The ODeL framework is premised on the assumption that every student learning can be optimally supported by modern electronic technologies and other digital facilities. (Ngubane-Mokiwa and Letseka, 2015)



# THE MODULE

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- ENN 103F (English for academic purposes)
- Semester module
- 7 Academics and 30 e-tutors
- About 18 thousand registered students

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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What is the relationship between e-tutors and lecturers in the ENN103F module?


What are the views of the e-tutors on the same module?

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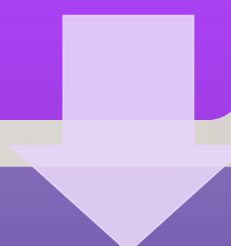
# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Blended learning –Thoughtful fusion of face-to face and online learning experiences(Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). It is about connectedness through digital means.

Unisa(2008)- Blended learning is the provision of learning opportunities using a combination of multiple strategies, pedagogies, educational technologies and student support where e-learning may form a significant proportion of the learning opportunities.




Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System Framework (Wang, Han and Yang, 2015) propose a six dimensional framework



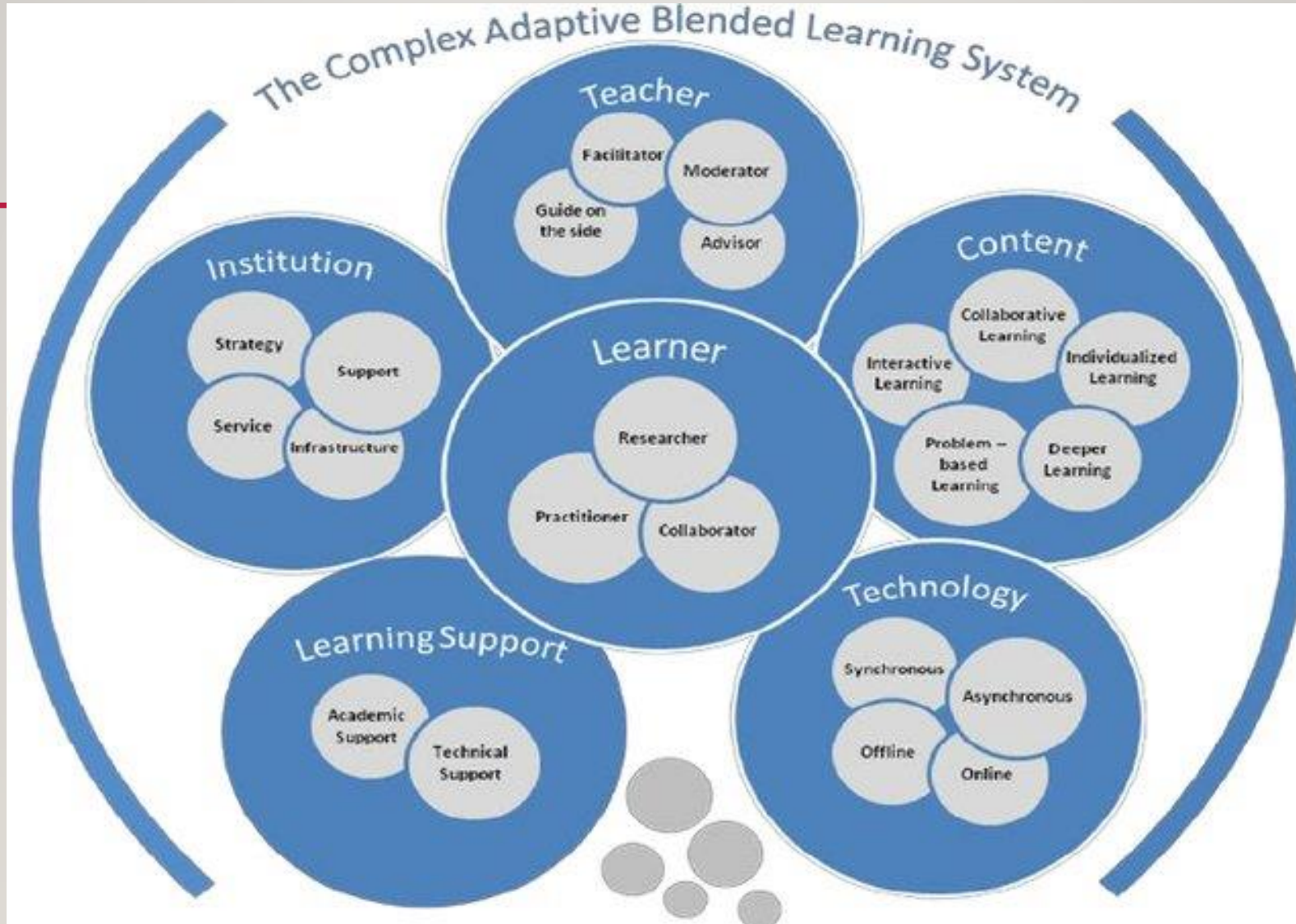
Community of Inquiry (Garrison and Akyol, 2013)  
The Col theoretical framework represents a process of creating a deep and meaningful (collaborative-constructivist) learning experience through the development three interdependent elements – social presence, cognitive presence and teaching presence

# BLENDED LEARNING

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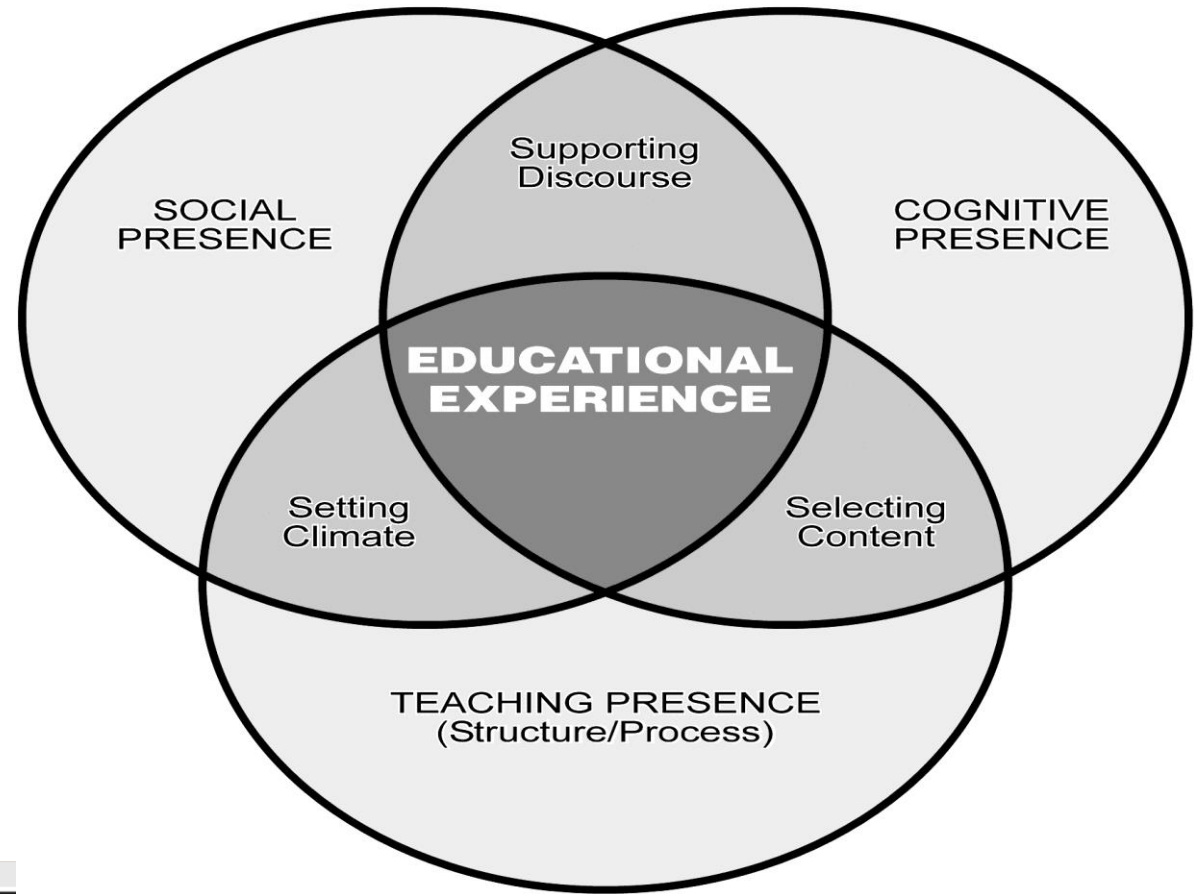
- Three models of blended learning:
    1. Face-to-face as primary component and some out of class online activities,
    2. Blended block, blocks of f2f followed by online tutorials,
    3. Fully online, synchronous through online tutorials and asynchronous through discussion forums.
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# CABLS





# Community of Inquiry



Communication Medium

# COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY

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# RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODS

- Qualitative
- Survey posted on the Learner Management System(n=10)
- Site for e-tutors

# PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: SUPPORT FROM LECTURERS

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Varied responses- “ I have emailed lecturers in the past when I needed to upload external resources. We were told to obtain permission from *them* before uploading resources. I feel awful to say that I did not get a response to my email”. This may point to lack of clarity of the institution’s policy on e-tutoring. Also, the use of ‘them’ may imply that there is a feeling of ‘us’ and ‘them’ and that the e-tutors not see themselves as part of the team.

“Yes the support from the department is great”. Although this tutor seems happy about the support given, it may be problematic that lecturers are the ones that recommend for renewal of contract and the e-tutor might not be comfortable with negative comments.

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## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: EXPECTATIONS

“I think it would be nice if lecturers could put together an electronic portfolio for e-tutors. Don't just give us topics to discuss, rather give us the content broken down into lessons so that all students and tutors are on the same level”.

“I like the department to perhaps give ideas on what has been successful with other tutors and what types of activities students are responding to so that we can be more creative”. This comment puts an emphasis on the need for collaboration, which talks to the Community of Inquiry Theory.

Feelings of “isolation” are well documented in the literature on tutoring. Du, Ochola, and Wernher (2013) and Mashile and Matoane (2012) are also of the view that students as well as e-tutors in an ODL environment often feel disconnected, isolated and demotivated.

# CONCLUSIONS

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The relationship between e-tutors and academics remains a challenge. There seem to be no clear lines of communication between the two entities.

Policy on e-tutoring seems to be restricting and does not allow a lot of creativity for the e-tutors.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- E-tutors should be included in the curriculum design process. They need to give input into the course design as it may impact on their sense of professional identity and agency (Tait, 2004)
- Collaboration between e-tutors and lecturers should be encouraged. The relationship should be permeable, in order to facilitate ease of communication to address feelings of isolation on the side of the e-tutors (Mashile and Matoane, 2012)
- Policy on e-tutoring should be revisited as the technology also triggers changes in the curriculum (Wang, Han and Yang, 2015)

QUESTIONS?

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**THANK  
YOU!**