

E-Learning in Africa

What Works ?

Experience From SchoolNet Uganda

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What is an eLearning Course?

An eLearning course is one where teaching & learning are done over computer and/or Internet technologies (www, Email, discussion boards, virtual classrooms, Video conferences, whiteboards etc).

eLearning courses may involve :

- Computer – Learner interactions
- Teacher – Learner interactions
- Learner - Learner interaction

Pros & Cons of E-learning

Pros



- ✓ Any-time & Any-where
- ✓ More customized & flexible instruction
- ✓ Have a job while taking a class
- ✓ Side benefits of learning new technologies & technical skills
- ✓ More Learner-to-Learner interaction

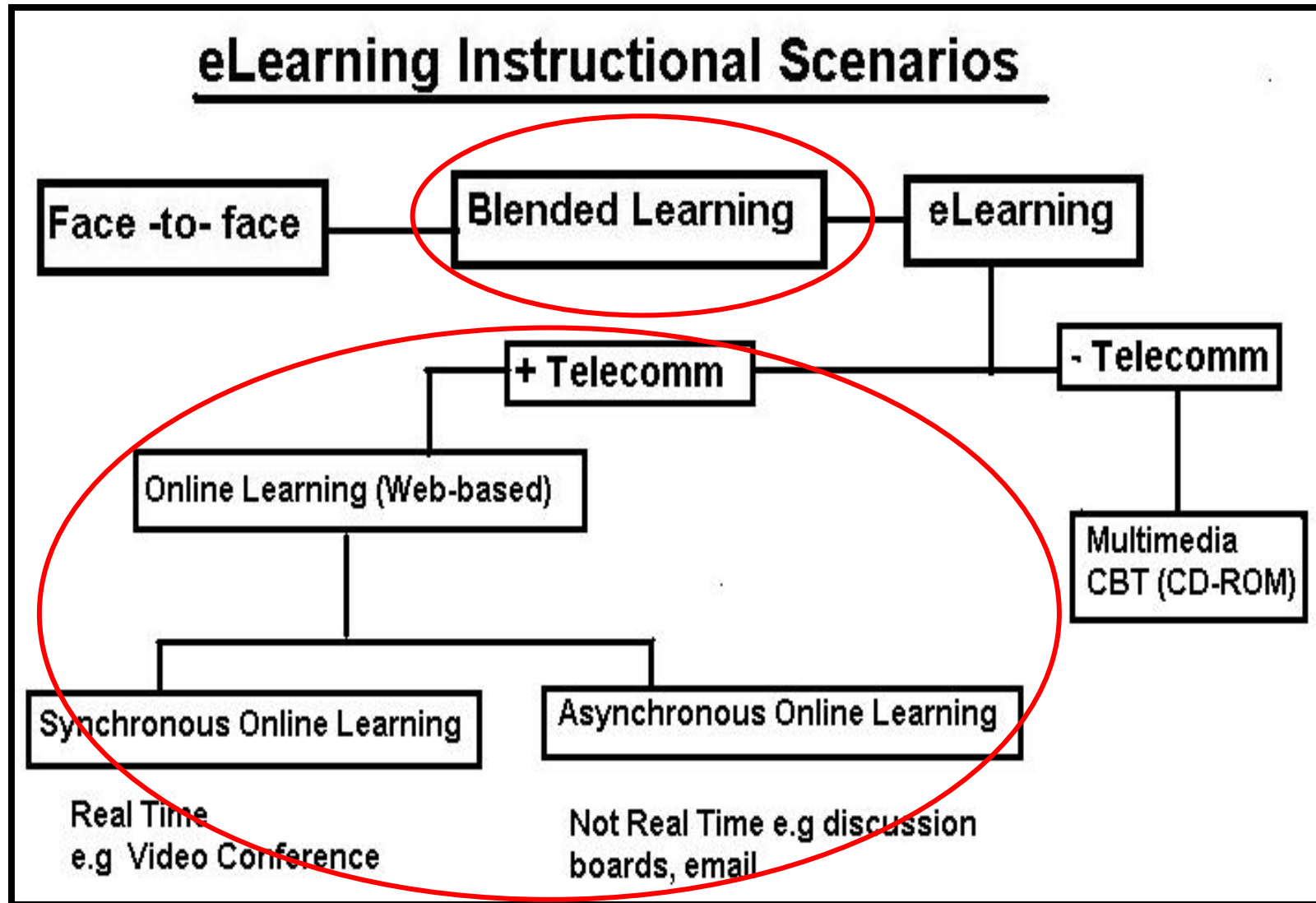
Cons



- ✗ Lacks Face-to-face interaction – Learner isolation
- ✗ Requires new skills from the learner & instructor
- ✗ Requires highly motivated students
- ✗ Requires highly disciplined students who can work independently
- ✗ Requires access to computer & Internet

All of which must be addressed

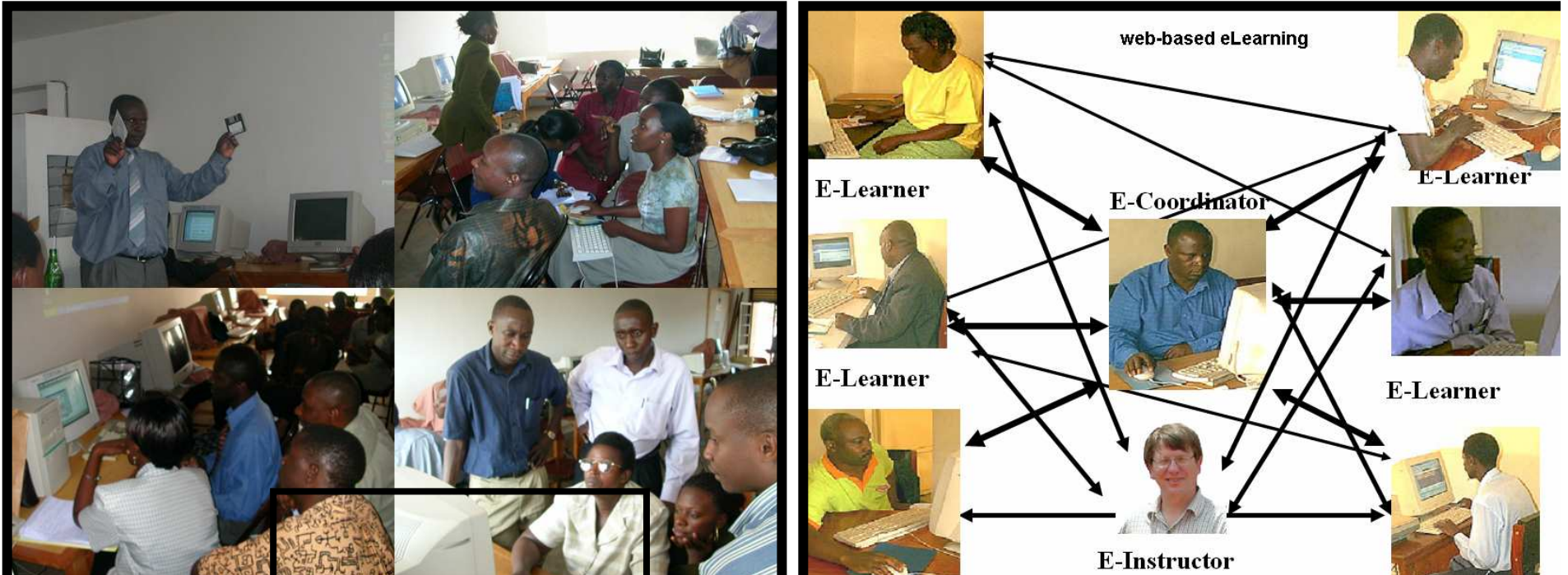
Types of eLearning Courses



What Works?

1. Blended E-learning (F2F and online sessions)

- **F2F at the start** : Introduction to the Learning Management System(LMS), Online pedagogy, communication tools and channels, resolve login issues;
- **F2F in the middle**; share personal experiences & solutions to challenges



1 (a). Why a F2F at the start ?



The Need for F2F Session at the Beginning

- Put faces to names
- Ensure learners can log-in the LMS
- Check learners have the minimum technical requirements (what browser and browser setting, what plug-in? –can you supply them?)
- Orientation to the LMS and pedagogy to be used.
- Check that learners have the prerequisite skills
- Ensure learners can use the Internet tools comfortably and responsibly.
- Discuss the expectations, hopes, fears and challenges learners have/anticipate and develop strategies for success.
- Caution learners against online intimidation and bullying.
- Remind learners that despite all the “sweet talk” about e-learning, e-learning courses are more challenging the Face-2-Face courses.
- Talk about the assessment rubric (most often very different from that of F2F courses).
- Provide any offline materials (Print, CDs, DVDs, Video or audio tapes)

Failure to address these issues, results in a very high drop-out rate in the 1st weeks!!!!

1 (a). Why a F2F in the Middle ?



The Need for F2F Session in the Middle

- Share experiences
- Discuss challenges & possible ways of addressing them
(No single size fits all)
- Develop skills for group projects.
- Opportunity to engage with colleagues to enrich professional relationship.

Let the learners be in the driver's seat – Allow for more face-2-face

Learner-Learner interaction

Some of the Challenges As Mentioned by Learners during the F2F session in the Middle

- Internet Connectivity (slow, irregular)
- Electricity (irregular)
- Slow Typing speeds (high costs in Internet cafes)
- Low ICT skills & ICT confidence
- Getting time for the Course
- Other competing School Activities & Programs
- Small number of Computers
- Meeting deadlines
- Delayed response from colleagues

What works?

2. Provide training materials in both offline formats (CDs, Print) and online Formats

What Works?

3. Learners must have some prerequisite skills



- ✓ Typing Skills
- ✓ File Management
- ✓ Web Browsing
- ✓ Word Processing
- ✓ Email
- ✓ Chating
- ✓ Writing Skills
- ✓ Internet research

Students who struggle with or become frustrated with new technology , should become comfortable with the technology before attempting an online course

What Works?

4. E-Learning course designers must use principles of Good Teaching – Sound Pedagogy

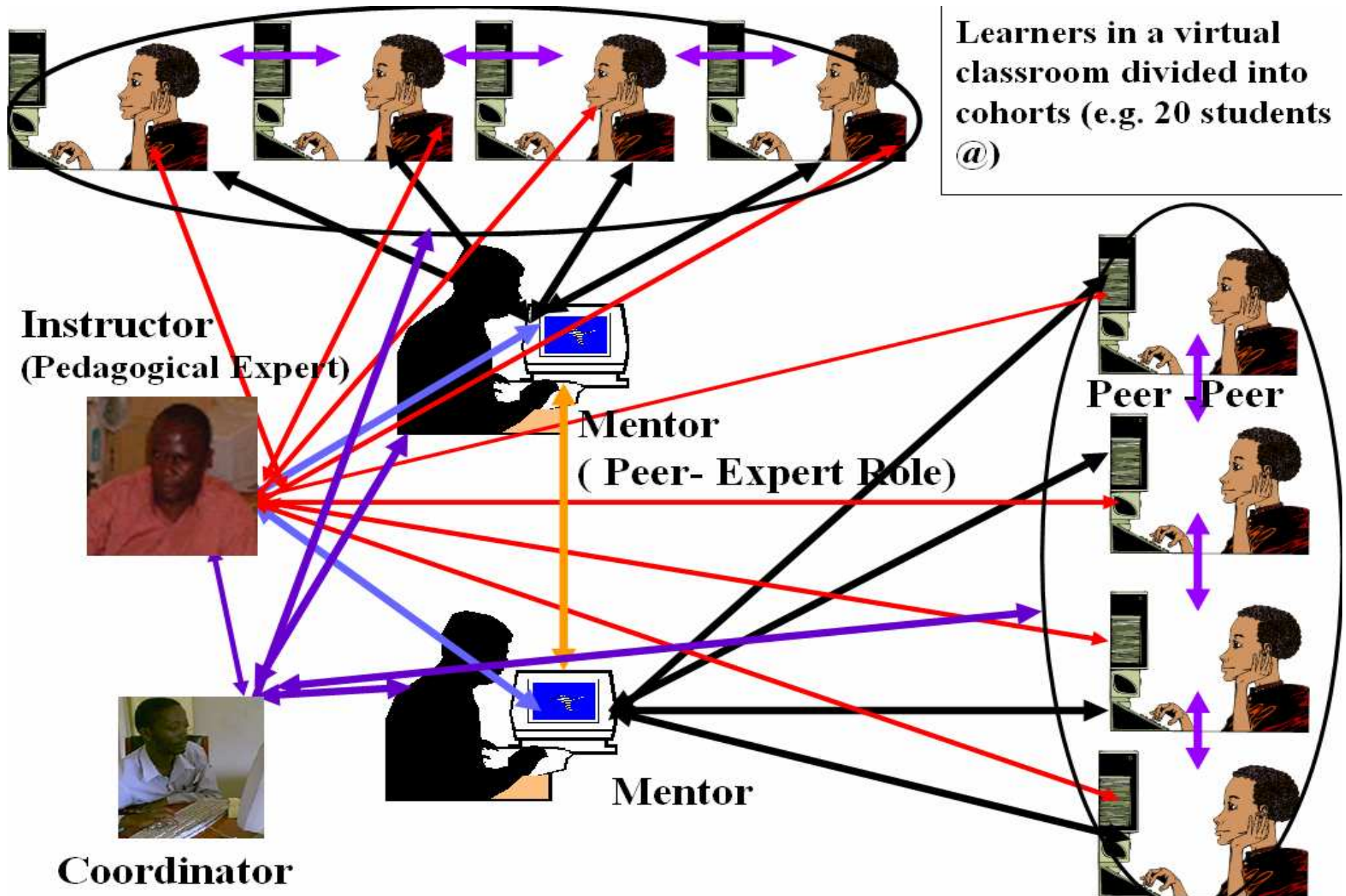
1. Promote Teacher-Student Interaction
2. Promote Student-Student Interaction
3. Encourage High Expectations
4. Promote Rich & Prompt Feedback
5. Promote Active Learning
6. Facilitate Time on Task
7. Address Different Learning Styles

(Chickering & Gamson, 1987)

Principles of Good Teaching are required for both face-to-face courses and eLearning courses. eLearning not merely changing the teaching materials into an electronic format or just including animations, sound or video!!!!!!

What Works?

5. *The Complex online interaction must be managed*



What Works?

6. Clearly spell out the roles& responsibilities of the online staff (instructor, coordinator, mentors) and the ground rules

Example : Mentor Responsibilities

1. Promote Peer-Peer Dialog & Collaboration Among learners
2. Provide Encouragement, Constructive Feedback and Support
3. Facilitate & Spark Off Group Discussions
4. Support learners by Commenting , Encouraging & Giving Advice From Time to Time
5. Answer questions & Queries . Assessment Recommendations
6. Creating a sense of community &collaboration . Progress Reports
7. Schedule and Facilitate Online real-time discussions in the Virtual Classrooms
8. Good Communication (Prompt, Instructive, Friendly, Follow-up)

7. Provide online orientation training for the online staff especially the mentors (let them experience what it means to be an online student)

What Works?

8. Proper choice of learners. Not all learners can succeed in eLearning!!

Participants' Competencies (needed for Successful Completion)

- Self-Confidence & A Commitment To Success
- Preparedness & Self-direction
- Being Focused & Good Time Management Skills
- Ability To Work Independently And As A Group
- Strong Self-Motivation, Self-Discipline
- Risk-Taking & Creative Problem Solvers
- Confidence To Follow Directions And To Ask For Assistance When Necessary
- Tolerance For Delays in Receiving A Response From the Instructor/Mentor or Colleagues
- Time to Work on the Course & Good Comprehension Skills

What Works - Summary

- Blended E-learning (F2F & Online Sessions)
- Provide training materials in both offline & online formats
- Learners with some prerequisite skills
- Course design based on principles of good teaching – sound pedagogy
- Management of the complex online interaction
- Clearly spelled out roles of online staff
- Conduct online orientation training for the online staff
- Selection of learners with certain competencies.

THANKS FOR LISTENING