Teaching and Engaging Students Within Complex Blended Learning Programmes
Medienfachwirt Online

Kerstin Nilsson · TLA TeleLearn-Akademie · Hamburg · Germany · nilsson@tla.de · www.tla.de

The *Medienfachwirt Online*, a blended learning szenario, prepares to gain the title 'Bachelor of Media Engineering (CCI)'. Within 18 months the level of doing the extensive examination, reaching from business administration, HR, to media design will be obtained. Considering complexity and volume of the programme, a sophisticated tutoring and assignment concept has been integrated. The course has been granted for its excellence with the quality labels *Comenius Siegel* 2005 and 2010 as well as the *Innovationspreis der Deutschen Druckindustrie*.

Training & Support

All online tutors run through a three step training programme:

(i) Technical basics: Online tutors are intensively trained in the handling of **Blackboard Learn 9.1** and the **virtual classroom Elluminate Live** by experienced staff of the TLA TeleLearn-Akademie. Moreover the handling of **additional tools** such as social media elements, which are used in class, are trained.

(ii) Pedagogical basics: Online tutors run through the German version of Gilly Salmons online course '**E-Moderating: The key to teaching and learning online**'.

(iii) Coaching: Based on individual needs and expertise online tutors are supported in teaching online (pedagogical and technical) by experienced TLA staff.
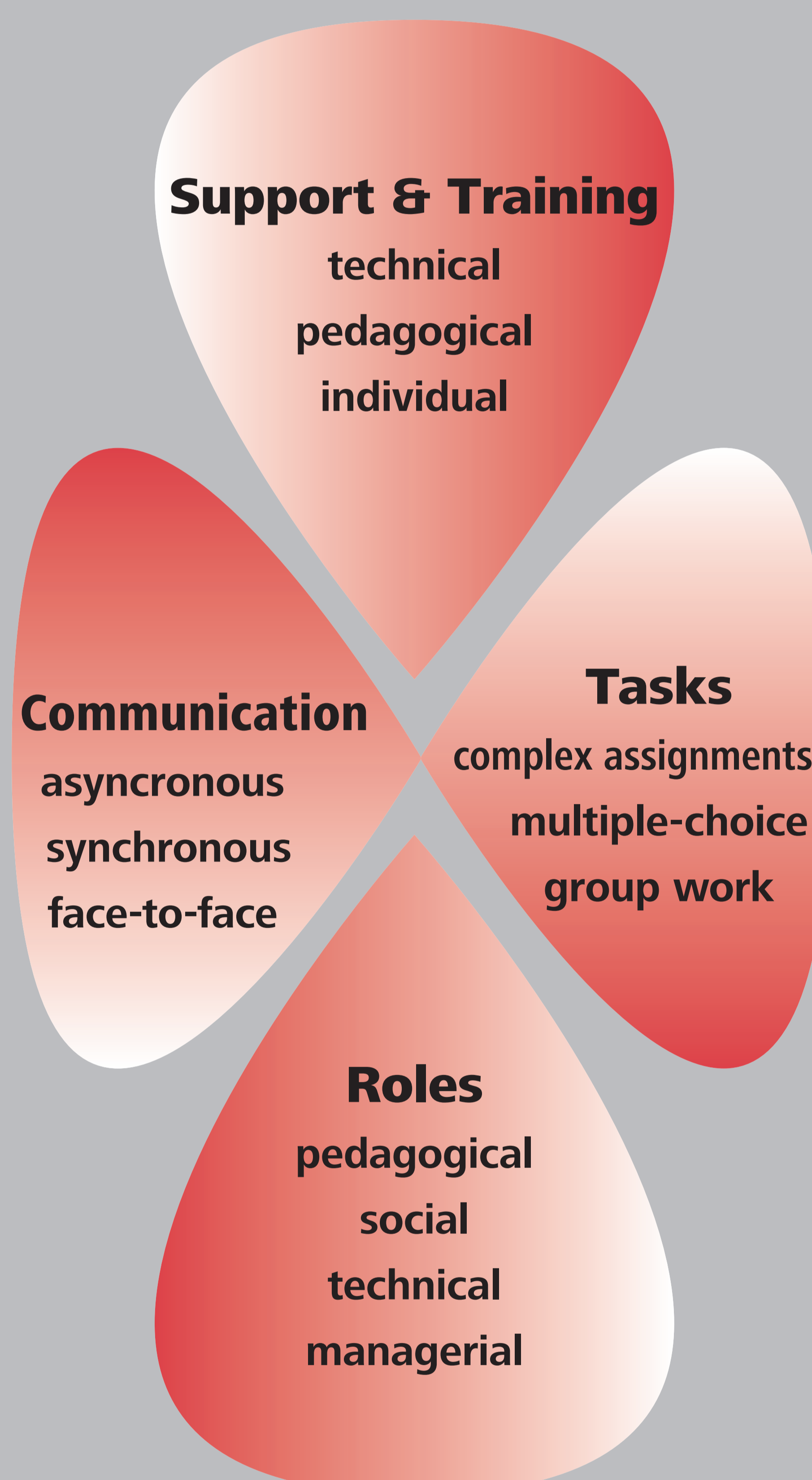
Communication

Asynchronous

The course design particularly considers communication via **discussion boards**.

Student-student as well as student-tutor interaction do happen asynchronously in order to enable flexibility in time and place. An important issue when considering that students of the programme are usually engaged in full-time jobs. Based on experiences discussion boards enable a transparent, structured and target-orientated communication.

Synchronous

Next to regular face-to-face seminars, students meet synchronously. On the one hand there are self-organised meetings among students which happen within **Wimba Pronto**.

On the other hand online tutors offer seminars within **Elluminate** that address content, which is difficult to access for students. On enquiry, ad-hoc meetings are offered to students for instance to prepare for upcoming examinations.

Support & Training
technical
pedagogical
individual

Communication
asyncronous
synchronous
face-to-face

Tasks
complex assignments
multiple-choice
group work

Roles
pedagogical
social
technical
managerial

Tasks

Assignments do help students to reflect on their learning outcome and recess the learning material. Three different assignment methods have been applied to the instructional design of the *Medienfachwirt Online*:

- **Multiple Choice Tests**
for self-assessment.

- **Complex Assignments (Exercises)**
that have to be solved alone.

- **Group Work**
Learning in groups has been identified as another motivational factor within the programme. Next to face-to-face seminars group work does support the development of independent learning groups where students prepare themselves for the final examination at the chamber of industry and commerce.

Online tutors review the two last mentioned and provide **feedback**, which should direct a successful learning outcome.

For mainly motivational purpose students receive **credit points** for their work. If they attain at least 70% of the highest possible score of a module, they receive a **certificate** from the TLA.

Roles

The tutoring concept goes in line with Berge's (1995) categories of the online tutor:

Pedagogical: There is always one expert who is responsible for the tutoring on the subject level.

Social & Technical: A 'learning coach' accompanies students from the beginning until the end of a course. He has an overview about student's activities and the course programme and provides pedagogical as well as technical support.

Managerial: Each course has got a contact person on the organisational level who cares for formalities such as certificates, sponsorships and examinations as well as affairs addressing accommodation and face-to-face seminars.

Please make a comment!

References

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Berge, Z. L. (1995). Facilitating Computer Conferencing: Recommendations From the Field. Educational Technology, 35(1), 22-30. Available: http://www.emoderators.com/moderators/teach_online.html [2.3.2011].

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