

Blended learning: what's in it for me?

There is increasing interest in the use of blended and e-learning for training and education in the defence and security sectors. In this paper, we consider the business advantages and disadvantages that may be incurred by the various stakeholders- providers, purchasers and students. We review some of the recent literature on the success of blended learning from out with the defence sector, in areas such as healthcare and international development.

Blended and e-learning may provide the potential for cost benefits for both providers and purchasers, and flexibility for learners. These benefits, of course, must be traded against possible dis-benefits. Such dis-benefits may be cultural, diplomatic and personal.

There are several advantages for such an approach, over traditional delivery methods:

- Increasing the geographic limits of participation, as by their very nature, the defence and security sectors markets are global.
- Reduced costs or higher profit margin, as there is a reduced requirement for face-to-face contact.
- Increased flexibility for participants, as they can fit training around their operational commitments
- Allowing purchasers to invest in the most competent employees; individuals whom the organisation may not – under more traditional delivery mechanisms – be willing to release for study purposes
- Attracting participants to undertake further study, for example Masters programmes, by providing 'tasters' of course content.
- Allowing purchasers to assess the operational benefits of particular training programmes, before committing to longer duration courses for their staff

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