

5-2009

# Employee orientation: Exploring blended learning strategies to improve learner outcomes and meet organizational goals

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Employee Orientation:  
Exploring Blended Learning Strategies to Improve Learner Outcomes and Meet Organizational  
Goals

by

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University of Nevada Las Vegas  
2009

A professional paper submitted in partial fulfillment  
Of the requirements for the

Master of Science of Hospitality Administration  
William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration

Graduate College  
University of Nevada Las Vegas  
May 2009



## Abstract

### Employee Orientation: Exploring Blended Learning Strategies to Improve Learner Outcomes and Achieve Corporate Initiatives

by

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The problem of effective, efficient and pragmatic solutions involving employee training are compounded when geographic logistics become an issue as organizations grow. Organizations must ensure financial and human resources are allocated to develop the highest impact training strategies at the lowest cost. Training in employee orientation was chosen as a logical starting point to re-think current training models to improve learner outcomes and achieve corporate initiatives. Thus, research involved literature review of basic concepts of learning theories and the integration of theory with pedagogical methods and technological delivery media. The result was a conceptual blended learning model reducing current training time by approximately fifty percent. This model can be revised and adapted as needed for advanced training specifications.

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## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I thank Almighty God for sustaining me and giving me the strength to continue when I felt like giving up. I thank Doyle Paden, CNB Director of Employee Development, and his staff for their support and cooperation in my academic endeavor. I am grateful to Dr. Gail Sammons for her guidance, instruction, and advice for the many times that I needed assistance. I thank my children, Damen and Caitlin, for their support, understanding, and encouragement. This would not have been possible without the support of Cherokee Nation Enterprises whose commitment to employee professional growth and advancement inspires and motivates me to give back in kind.

## PART ONE

### Introduction

In tough economic times, employers in the hospitality industry, indeed every industry, must utilize their physical, financial and human resources intelligently to the greatest extent possible. One way human resource management can help to accomplish this goal is to utilize blended learning to optimize employee training and development. Many business organizations have properties and employees scattered across a large geographic area that span states, countries or around the world. The problem of effective, efficient, and pragmatic solutions for the delivery of training and employee development is critical especially in the highly competitive hospitality industry. The evolution of technology and pedagogy continues to converge and integrate in educational institutions and the hospitality industry. There is no one-size fits-all ideal blended learning strategy but a work in progress. This paper will explore the topic of blended learning from learning theory to its practical applications and the integration of e-learning technology with traditional classroom instruction for new employee orientation.

#### *Purpose*

The purpose of this paper is to develop a blended learning program by integrating e-learning with classroom training for new employee job orientation for Cherokee Nation Enterprises employees.

#### *Statement of the Objective*

The objective is to develop a conceptual blended learning model to assist human resource management in mapping a strategy that integrates e-learning technology, face-to-face instruction, and various instructional methods.

### *Justification*

The majority of employee training occurs at our HR Corporate training facility, centered geographically across an area encompassing fourteen counties in northeastern Oklahoma. This means that employees that live and work at distant locations must travel between of 35 to 100 miles for training.

### *Constraints*

There is no universally accepted mix regarding blended learning for business entities due to their unique requirements and differences in physical, financial and human resources. This logic extends to the individual learner who is unique in regards to their level of experience and learning style. The blended learning mix advocated in this paper would only be applicable to learners and companies with similar characteristics.

## PART TWO

### Introduction

This segment of the paper will explore topics through literature review relating to blended learning and instructional design. There are numerous learning theories by brilliant academic theorists who contributed to the understanding of how people process information to learn. People utilize blended sensory perception (i.e., visual, auditory, and kinesthetic) and blended cognitive thinking (i.e., memory, attention, logic, reasoning etc) to learn. As Singh (2003) noted, that organizations must utilize in their strategies a blend of learning approaches to get the right content, in the right format to the right people at the right time. It is the combination of these factors rather than the reliance on technology alone to facilitate learning and knowledge transfer. As Sitzmann (2006) points out, “that instructional methods rather than delivery media determine learning outcomes” (p.654). However, the right delivery media can certainly enhance cognitive information processing through various interactive multimedia formats. One only needs to consider how much the Internet and technology has impacted learning in educational institutions to conclude e-learning is here to stay.

#### *Current Employee Orientation Program*

The current Cherokee Nation Enterprises (CNE) employee orientation model utilizes a step-by-step model into a chronological program or syllabus style as represented (minus breaks) in Table 1.

Table 1.

---

Day 1-Topics	Day 2-Topics
1. Kick-Off event	1. HR Paperwork
2. Harassment Policy	2. CNE Technology
3. Title 31 & SAR	3. Alcohol Awareness
4. Benefits Overview	4. Gambling Awareness
5. Handouts	5. Safety Overview
6. Tour	6. Guest Service Overview
7. Receive Badges	7. Group Activity
8. Evaluation	8. Evaluation

---

Note: From condensed version of “ *CNE Employee Orientation Program*”

The disadvantage of this current model is the linear rigid sequence and sometimes passive manner which learners’ step through the orientation session and follow up with an evaluation at the end of the day to measure learning. The instructional method primarily used is lecture in a classroom setting utilizing PowerPoint slides, video, and a recently deployed interactive game modeled after Jeopardy (i.e., group activity). As learning tools, games typically associated with recreation and entertainment may improve trainee performance utilizing e-learning, encourage practice, discover patterns and relationships within training material and reduce anxiety during orientation. To apply blended learning concepts, one could replace some components with self-

study or e-learning activities. For example, topics such as Title 31 and SAR that are job specific and or require certification.

### Literature Review

The topic of blended learning inherently involves the process of human learning. How people learn is an extremely complex subject involving several academic disciplines and learning theories prohibiting in-depth exploration in this paper. However, this does not underscore the importance of empirical findings and results grounded in learning theory. It is very difficult to pin down any one specific learning theory applicable across the board to instructional designs. It would be equally difficult, if not impossible, to find an instructional design that is identical and utilized by two organizations without some modification. Academic researchers may not agree on the definition or terminology of blended learning; however, there seems consensus of the importance of the application of well-grounded learning theory to instructional design. This paper will attempt to articulate a logical progression of thought from learning theory to blended learning design by answering the following questions:

1. What is Blended Learning?
2. What are examples of learning theories?
3. What is the link between theory and instructional design?
4. How does instructional design affect pedagogy?
5. What are the implications of blended learning?

## *Blended Learning*

There are those who take issue with the terminology and definition of blended learning. Oliver, (2005) proposes that blending learning either relies on the idea of dichotomies that are suspect within the context of learning with technology. In addition, the term becomes ineffective as a discriminating concept and is thus without purpose. Blended is defined as follows: “To mix; to prepare by thoroughly intermingling different varieties or grades; to combine into an integrated whole; to produce a harmonious effect” (“Blend”, 2009). Learning is defined as follows: “The act or experience of one that learns; knowledge or skill acquired by instruction or study; the modification of a behavioral tendency by experience” (“Learn”, 2009). Thus, the definition for blended learning becomes an integrated approach combining instruction of different varieties into an integrated whole delivered through various media to produce a harmonious effect achieving the desired outcomes for both the learner and organization.

Synchronous (face-to-face) classroom training still dominates the instructional delivery method used in corporate business training programs. E-learning is any technique that involves an electronic delivery method and content delivered via the Internet, intranet, CD-ROM, audio or video technologies. Therefore blended refers to a combination of two or more delivery modes of instruction. The methods of instruction can be synchronous (i.e., interacting in real time) or asynchronous (i.e., not at the same time). Synchronous blended learning may take the form of webinars (i.e., live seminars conducted over the Internet), teleconferencing, video-conferencing or through e-mail exchanges.

Instructor-led e-learning solutions are appropriate when the intended audience members are dispersed geographically, comfortable with technology or work on different time shifts.

Videoconferencing used in the same fashion as a traditional classroom negates the need for the

learners and instructor to be physically together. Videoconferencing allows participants in different locations to view and interact with instructors and other trainees.

Live e-learning takes place in a virtual classroom at a scheduled time at which learner undertakes to attend, just as they would a traditional class, minus the travel. Further, learners can collaborate, share information, and ask questions of one another and of the instructor in real time (Alonzo, Lopez, Manrique, & Vines, 2005). The initial utilization of a virtual classroom during new employee orientation may help acclimate employees to their new learning environment and build upon their previous knowledge and experience. Visual, audio, and job aids (i.e., handouts, forms, worksheets etc) should be designed with interactivity, interesting material, and specificity in a manner that closely resembles how the participants will use the information on the job. For example, a new employee will learn during orientation how to properly confirm electronic timesheets and complete any corresponding forms using a computer and printer.

Asynchronous blended learning refers to a training technique primarily involving self-study where the primary delivery method is electronic and the content is delivered via the Internet, intranet, CD-ROM, video or audio technologies (Edwards, 2009). They are generally accessed by the learner without an instructor and on their own time. These may include computer or web-based training designed for self-study and usually delivered CD-ROM or over the Internet and or intranet. Knowledge databases may be regarded as a resource repository of useful information supporting training solutions. In a manner of speaking, the Internet itself may be described as a knowledge database.

A web-based training program and knowledge databases can be integrated into classroom training in a number of ways. As an example, for new employees, an exercise may require participants to browse the company website and find selected topics. The topics may include

policies and procedures applicable to all employees or job specific policies. These are primary information driven subjects that can be assessed when needed. This type of knowledge is directly related to real job activities and day-to-day responsibilities. When planning blended learning developments, as well as making pragmatic decisions, one needs to rely on a set of general principles combined in a meaningful pedagogical framework. In order to do that, one must agree on defining theories of learning, pedagogical framework, and models of e-learning.

### *Learning Theory*

A theory in general provides an explanation for observations made over time, explains and predicts behavior and can never be established beyond all doubt. Thus, a theory may be modified and several theories may collectively prove to be applicable. In order to provide a better focus toward the understanding of human learning and instruction several broad perspectives of learning theories are provided.

Behaviorism posits that learning from various stimuli and the focus of behaviorism are outcomes or behaviors that result from training. For example, a new behavioral pattern being repeated until it becomes automatic. An American education psychologist, Robert Gagne, was a major contributor to behaviorism with his conditions of learning theory (Kruse, n.d.). The significance of the assumptions made are different instructional conditions bring about different types of learning. The following section outlines Gagne's nine-step events of instruction that show the instructional events and the corresponding mental internal processes:

Table 2. Gagne's Nine Step Events of Instruction

Instructional Event	Internal Mental Process
1. Gain attention	1. Stimuli activates receptors
2. Inform learners of objectives	2. Creates level of expectation for learning
3. Stimulate recall	3. Retrieval and activates short-term memory
4. Present the content	4. Selective perception of content
5. Provide learning guidance	5. Semantic coding for long-term storage
6. Elicit performance	6. Responds to questions
7. Provide feedback	7. Reinforcement and assessment of work
8. Assess performance	8. Retrieval and reinforcement for rating
9. Enhance retention	9. Retrieval and apply skill to new situation

Note: From "Gagne's nine event of instruction: An introduction", by Kruse, K., Retrieved April, 19, 2009, from [http://www.e-learningguru.com/articles/art3\\_3.htm](http://www.e-learningguru.com/articles/art3_3.htm)

Table 2 illustrates the mental processes that occur with the corresponding learning event. An effective blended learning curriculum will involve all of the above mentioned processes whereby learning objectives may be achieved through the integration of instructional design and various e-learning delivery systems. The use of linear (no user control) and non-linear (user controlled) multimedia may be used to design an effective training based on performance in measureable terms. For example, the effective use of PowerPoint presentations or self-paced computer-based training may be measured by quizzes, feedback or through a learning management system.

Constructivism is an active constructive process in which the learner builds a mental illustration of knowledge based on their personal interpretation and experience. This theory focuses on preparing the learner in problem-solving in uncertain situations. This representation is continually open to modification, its structure and linkages forming the ground to which other knowledge structures are attached (Kristinsdóttir, 2001). Constructivism is an epistemology (i.e., study of the nature or origin of knowledge) describing how people learn and integrate new knowledge with prior knowledge and thus producing mental structures that are similar to the experiences they are currently engaged. In a blended learning environment, gauging the learner's previous experience and knowledge may be accomplished by pre-tests and introductory posts. In addition, designing tasks engaging the learner with cognitive demands may be accomplished through online team projects. The modes of media delivery for interaction to take place between the learner and content, instructor, or other learners can on various forms. The learner's use of computer-based technologies provides experience of meaning, participation and control. Collaboration is viewed as a variation of constructivism, whereby social interaction is a key ingredient to the learning process (Sigala, 2002). The significance is that knowledge is acquired externally from social interaction. On-the-job training is an example of this whereby interaction and mutual engagement with someone of greater skill reinforces learning for the novice. As such, constructivist Jerome Bruner (1985) stated, "There is not one kind of learning" and "any learner has a host of learning strategies at command" (p.8 ¶ 4).

The fundamental idea underlying engagement theory is that the students must be meaningfully engaged in learning activities through interaction with others and worthwhile tasks (Kearsley and Shneiderman, 1999). Kearsley and Shneiderman (1999) posits that engaged learning means that all student activities involve active cognitive processes such as creating, problem-solving, reasoning,

decision-making, and evaluation. Within the context of a blended learning platform, this could entail a group project or team effort involving learners at the same or different locations in learning activities. Real or virtual classroom settings allow interactivity and collaboration to occur negating distance and time constraints. These types of exercises emphasize team efforts involving communication, planning, management and social skills that are very important in the workplace. Behaviorism, constructivism, and engagement theories represent few of numerous learning theories. These were selected on their relevance to blended learning and instructional technology.

#### *Theory and Instructional Technology Link*

Instructional technology is the systematic application of theory and other organized knowledge to the task of instructional design and development (“Definitions of Instructional”, 1996, ¶ 6). An example of formulating an instructional design incorporating learning theory into a pedagogical approach utilizing technology is problem-based learning. Research by Savery and Duffy (2001) supports that problem-based learning, as a detailed instructional model, is consistent with the principles of constructivism. Problem-based learning is an instructional method where learners are actively engaged in working activities and tasks authentic to the environment in which they would be used.

Students who acquire knowledge in the context of solving problems utilizing problem-based learning are more likely to use it spontaneously. Students solve new problems more than individuals who acquire the same information under more traditional methods of learning facts and concepts through lecture (Major, 2001). The use of blended learning utilizing e-learning technologies and traditional classroom instruction is more commonplace in higher education institutions that employ problem-based learning (e.g., UNLV). The significance of discussing problem-based learning is the emphasis placed on problem solving in real-world situations.

Distance education intertwines technology and instructional methodologies allowing students from dispersed geographic locations and time zones to learn collectively or individually on assigned tasks. By definition, this is blended learning.

### *Business Implications of Blended Learning*

In the corporate world, training is a means to an end that requires an approach that applies various delivery options to teach, support and sustain the jobs skills and knowledge by employees for optimal job performance. Training is an on-going business necessity and finding effective, efficient, and pragmatic solutions at the lowest cost is imperative. A classroom training program limits access to those who can participate at a certain time and at a set geographic location. This becomes problematic as some organizations grow with subsidiary companies spread across a large geographic area. Alternatives must be explored to widen the reach of training options by leveraging technological delivery media and instructional methods. Many organizations already employ some manner of blended learning so implementation depends on a detailed needs assessment. Besides offering cost-effective alternatives to training, e-learning solutions facilitate knowledge transfer that supports learning theory propositions that different people learn in different ways. It was noted by Wilson and Smilanich (2005), that combining training solutions provides the flexibility organizations need to address the ever-shrinking half-life of knowledge and the need for faster deployment. A survey by Learning Circuits asked readers if their organizations were considering increasing e-learning initiatives as the result of the economic downturn. 71 percent of the respondents answered yes. Table 2 illustrates the level of changes in e-learning initiatives as a way of extending their learning function (i.e., training).

*Table 3. E-Learning Solutions Implementation Changes*

E-Learning Solution	Increase	Decrease	Same
Games and simulations	49%	13.7%	37.3%
Mobile learning	46%	12%	42%
Off-the-shelf courseware (WBT)	39.2%	15.7%	45.1%
Online mentoring/coaching	57.7%	5.8%	36.5%
Podcasts	54.2%	4.2%	41.7%
Rapid e-learning development	65.4%	7.7%	26.9%
In-house developed courseware	54.3%	10.9%	34.8%
Simulated 3D virtual worlds	34%	21.3%	44.7%
Social networking tools (blogs/wikis)	66%	10%	24%
Virtual classrooms	65.3%	8.2%	26.5%
Web conferencing	66.7%	6.3%	27.1%

Note: From “*E-Learning and the Economy*”, Laff, M.T., Retrieved April 10, 2009 from <http://www.astd.org/LC/news.htm#041>.

Table 3 illustrates the level of increase is significant in rapid e-learning development, virtual classrooms and web conferencing respectively. Equally important as cost effectiveness is to the organization is assessing the effectiveness of training methods to attain training objectives.

#### *Assessment*

Assessment is the process of documenting, usually in measureable term, knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes of the learner, a group of learners, the institution, or educational organization as a whole. For this paper, emphasis will be placed on the learner and the learning methods. It is

important to assess the learner's skills before and after training. This will ensure the trainee receives the level of instruction needed using the most effective delivery media to reach the learning objective in the shortest time span. The most commonly used assessments are as follows:

1. Formative: An assessment for learning occurring throughout the training. An example is feedback to aid instruction.
2. Summative: An assessment of learning occurring at the end of training. The intent is measure and report learning outcomes.
3. Quizzes
4. Pre and post tests

Assessments are important to measure if the learner has acquired the skills and knowledge required by the organization. It may also provide information pointing out deficiencies in the learning program that requires revision. The distinction between an assessment and evaluation is the extent of the judgment criteria.

### *Evaluation*

The most widely used model to evaluate training and learning is Donald Kirkpatrick's four levels of training evaluation. Kirkpatrick's (2007) four level model essentially measure:

1. Reactio  
n-how training participants react to it. A customer satisfaction measures:
2. Learni  
ng- the extent which participants change attitudes, increase knowledge, and or increase skill.
3. Behavi  
or-the extent to which change in behavior occurred.

- the final results that occurred as a result of the training.

This model suggests moving from one level one to level four sequentially with each level building upon the previous level. The higher the level is measured, the more precise measure of overall effectiveness of the training program. However, the measurements tend to be more detailed, specific, time-consuming and costly. It is this reason that many organizations may stop at level three. However, it is precisely this level where an accurate return of investment be realized. Many of the assessment tools used in this model, such as surveys and questionnaires, may be acquired in person or online in a blended learning fashion.

#### *Blended Learning in the Hospitality Industry*

Over the last few years, the gap has narrowed between real time instructor-led training and technology-based training. This trend has continued, albeit in a much slower way, in the hospitality industry. Jack in The Box's utilizes a blended learning approach that combined computer-based training modules, in-restaurant work, and classroom training to redesign its Shift Leader training program (Skolnick & McNally, 2001). They considered different training models including e-learning and video learning but opted for computer-based training for a number of reasons. They were able to utilize their existing technology through their low bandwidth satellite hook-up through their point of sale system made by the same company. The other reasons were consistency of training across all units, ease of updating information, twenty hour access, and a way to measure training activities. The results were training was reduced from 55 hours of classroom training to 23 hours of training and most is accomplished on computer. Travel time to training sites was reduced because most training is conducted in-house thus allowing crew members and shift leaders more time to serve guests.

## Summary

This paper advocates a blended learning solution for Cherokee Nation Enterprises employee orientation program. Blended learning refers to utilizing a combination of various media platforms to facilitate the transfer of knowledge in sometimes overlapping pedagogical methods to achieve optimal outcomes for the learner and organization. Learning theories provide the language and conceptual framework for interpreting the examples of learning that we observe in different learning environments. Learning theory also suggest where to look for solutions to practical problems. Theories do not give us solutions, but direct our attention to those variables that are crucial in finding solutions. Technological platforms in synchronous, asynchronous or in combination to deliver topic content allows flexibility and interactivity like never before. Examples include e-learning, video-conferencing, CD-ROM, and computer-based training to name a few. However, technology is a means to an end that depend on its integration with instructional methodologies to achieve the desired outcomes for the learner and organization.

## PART THREE

### Introduction

The focus of this section is devoted to articulating the combination of instructional strategies and media delivery methods to produce the desired learning outcome for Cherokee Nation Enterprises' employee orientation program. In order to reach this point, the objective of developing a blended learning strategy utilizing e-learning with face-to-face instruction was conveyed in part one. A clear definition of the blended learning concept, for this specific purpose, was achieved in part two. Restated, the definition of blended learning is the strategy of combining face-to-face instruction with e-learning using effective pedagogical methods delivered by various media formats in the most efficient time frame (Singh, 2001, 2003: "Blend," 2009: "Learn," 2009)

Part Two provided a brief description of how people learn according to well-known learning theories and their relevance to some aspects of human learning and instruction. Further, an example of the synthesis of learning theory and pedagogical approach utilizing technology as a facilitator was outlined in problem-base learning. Finally, the business implications and applications of the concepts and principles were provided in graphical information and business blended learning programs. The research into blended learning suggests the key to a successful program ensures focus is on the learning and business outcomes.

### Results

Figure 1 illustrates a blended learning model which synthesizes the various elements involved in learning into an integrated whole structure. The purpose of this model is to assist trainers in the development of a blended learning program that utilizes the appropriate combination of delivery media that facilitates the instruction methods to achieve optimal outcomes for the learner and the organization.

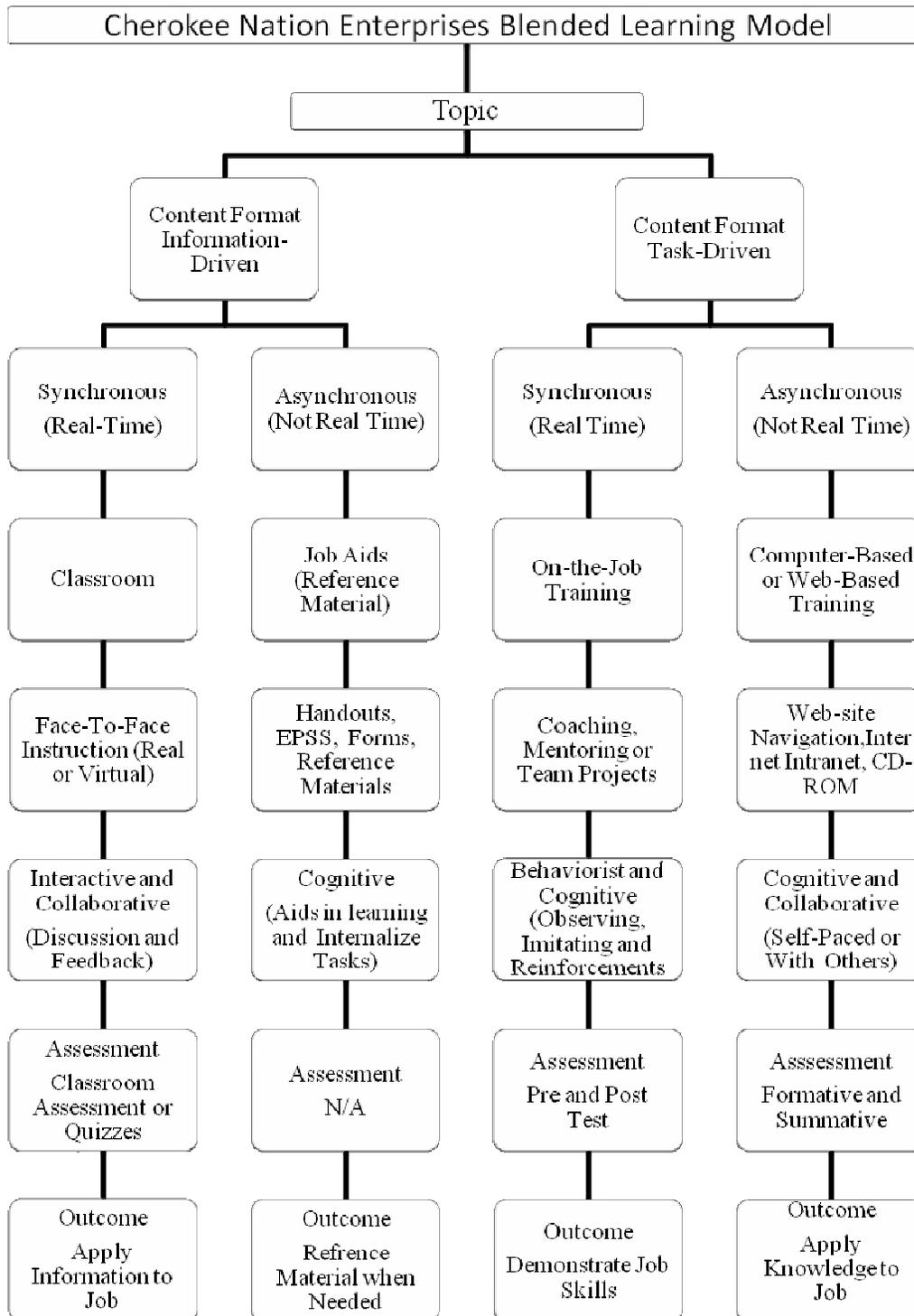


Figure 1. Cherokee Nation Enterprises Blended Learning Model by P. Washington (2009)

## Recommendations

This section will articulate and recommend the route taken from the topic or learning objective to the outcome using four components of the current employee orientation program as examples. Three are applicable to every employee regardless of their job position. The fourth example is a job specific topic relevant to certain job positions. The last example was included to illustrate a point regarding considerations in deciding which topic to include in new employee orientation and to what extent. As a general rule, the mapping direction taken is from top to bottom but can take a horizontal direction depending on the subject matter. This will be discussed further in the last example below.

## Harassment in the Workplace

The harassment policy overview is mandatory for all Cherokee Nation Enterprises employees. The topic is information-driven in content and knowledge transfer occurs synchronously. Thus, one would start at the extreme left hand column down to the classroom block which describes the media delivery method (see Figure 2). The pathway blocks are outlined slightly darker.

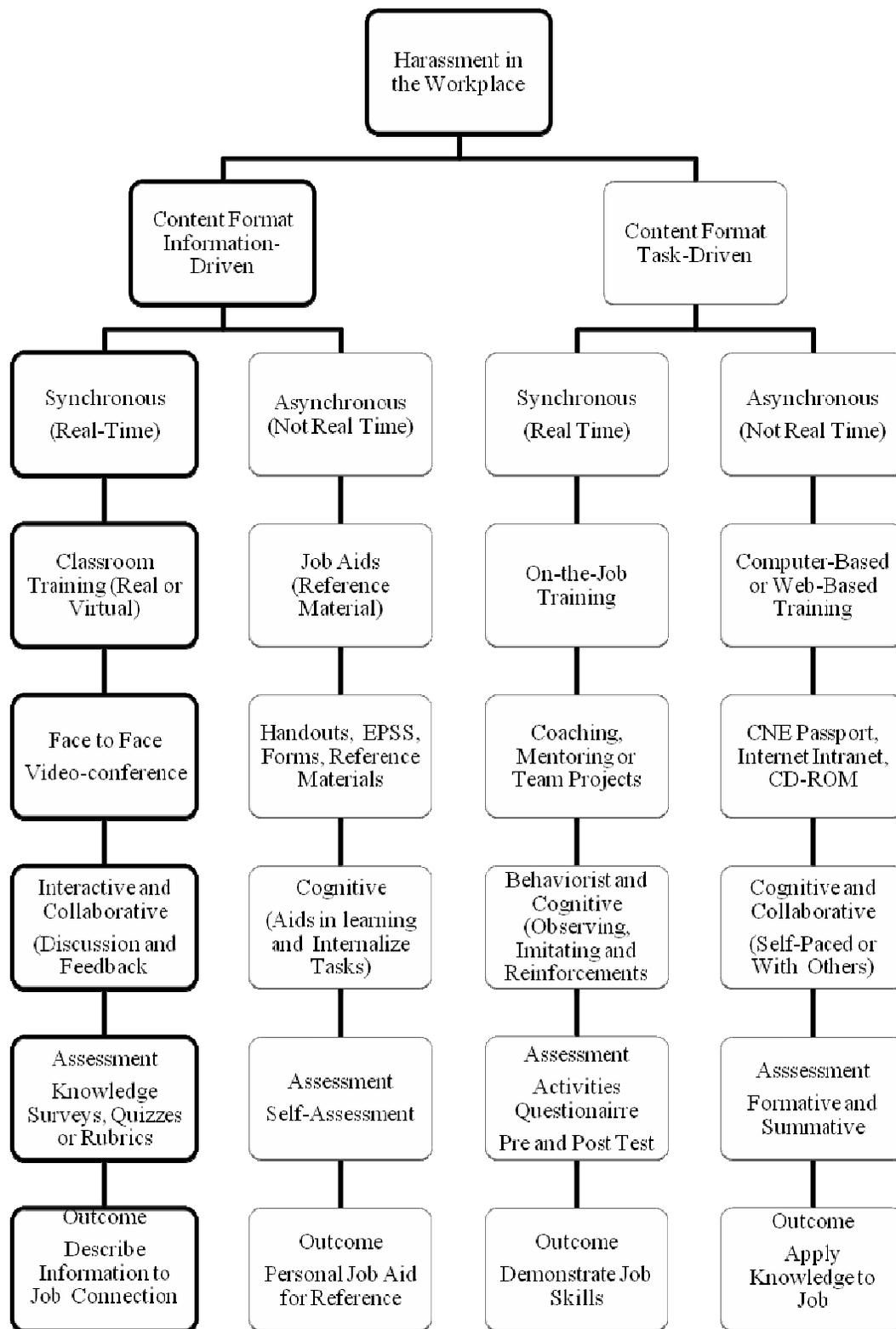


Figure 2. CNE Blended Learning Model: Harassment in the Workplace by P. Washington (2009)

Moving down to the face-to-face (real or virtual) block describes the context which knowledge transfer takes place. Topics like harassment in the workplace or benefits may require subject matter experts and extra time to cover in-depth. This would entail travel time and associated costs by company employees (subject-matter experts) to the training facility. This could be alleviated by utilizing video-conferencing by subject matter experts thereby reducing costs. The technological infrastructure is already in place with IT support that is currently used for distance education. The issues that would need coordination are time use and perhaps some additional hardware for some locations.

The next block in succession characterizes the interaction during learning activities that reinforce learner knowledge retention and raise competency level. The next block immediately below describes forms of assessments utilized for the purpose of measuring learning taking place or learner's reaction to the training. This is critical information to gauge program effectiveness and to identify deficiencies for needed revisions. Lastly, in the bottom block, applying knowledge to the job is the intended outcome.

#### CNE Technology

This topic is primarily task-driven and asynchronous in nature due to extended time required by the learner to master computer-based tasks at a new job site (see Figure 3). The pathway blocks are outlined slightly darker.

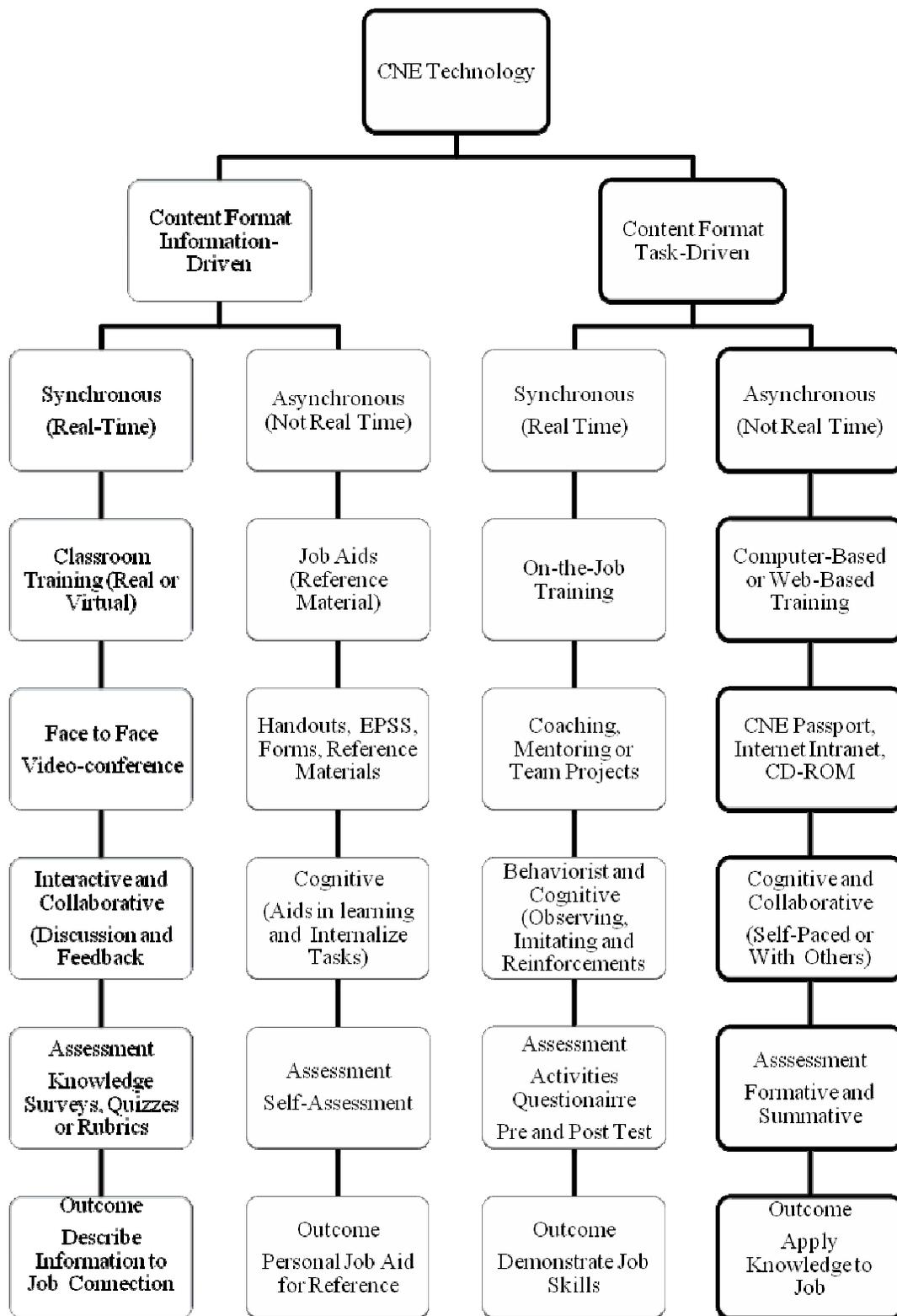


Figure 3. CNE Blended Learning Model: CNE Technology by P. Washington (2009)

Consideration must be given to the learner's current knowledge, skill level in computer use and ability in self-paced instruction. However, all new employees are given reference materials (i.e., employee handbook) and a certain level of job-coaching to attain familiarity. Thus, most learning occurs asynchronously and follows a path on the extreme right of the model downward. The block directly below describes the media delivery method of computer-based training. The following block describes, specifically in this case, CNE Passport as the context where knowledge transfer takes place.

The significance is the ability to build upon existing knowledge by utilizing technology as a facilitator to gain access to information pertinent to the learning objective and desired outcome. The next block characterizes the interaction that takes place followed by two forms of assessment. However, due to the self-paced nature of learning, self-assessment and e-surveys may be the best indicators of learning and website functionality. This can be carried out efficiently, effectively with little cost. The last block involves applying the knowledge to the job as the intended outcome.

### Safety

This topic in new employee orientation is generally information-driven and asynchronous in time frame (see Figure 4).

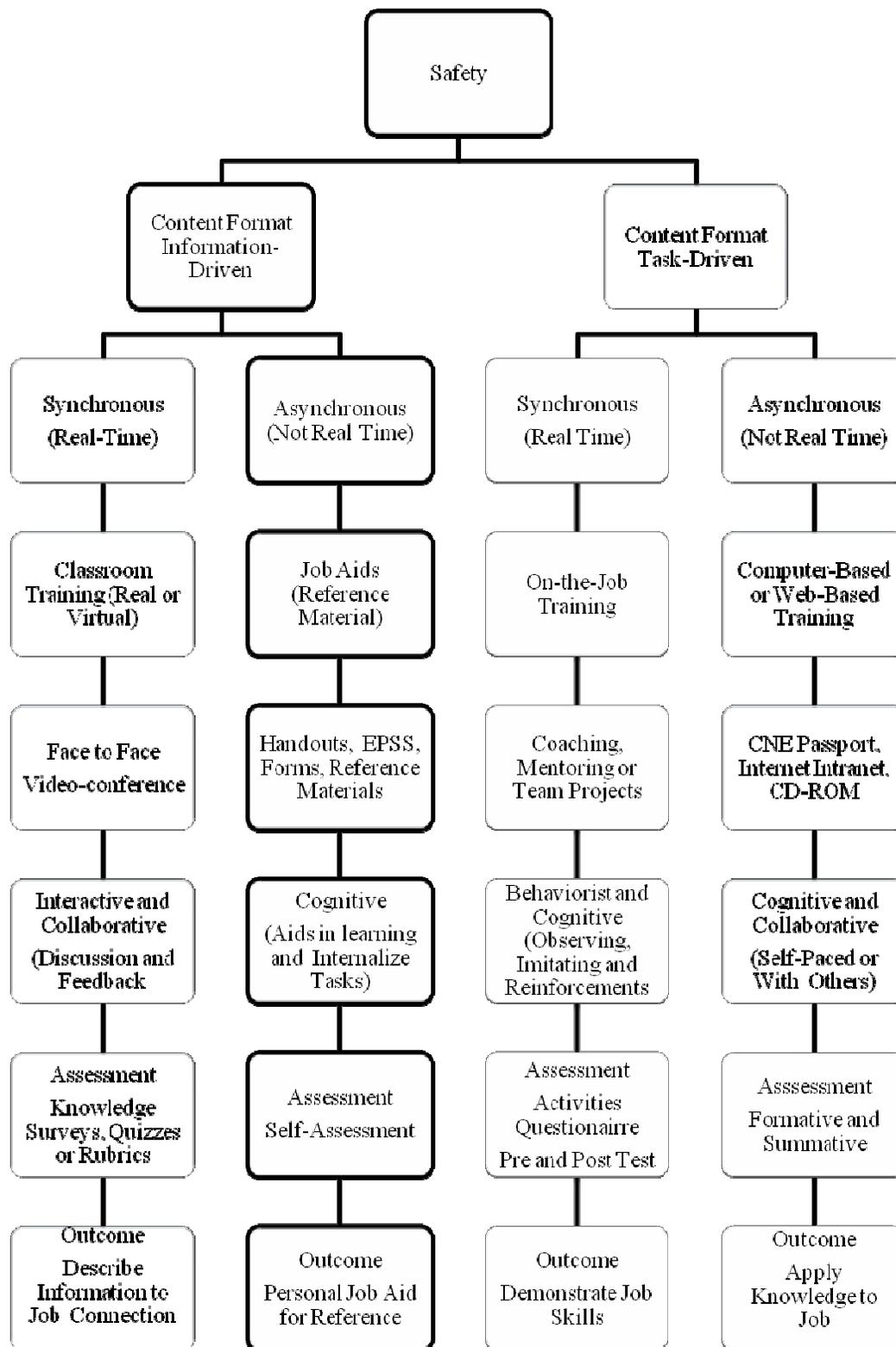


Figure 4. CNE Blended Learning Model: Safety by P. Washington (2009)

Therefore, one would follow the second column down to the block containing job aids as the media delivery choice. The block directly below describes handouts and reference material where knowledge transfer takes place. For clarification purposes, Gloria Gery (1991) defines electronic performance support systems (EPSS) as:

an integrated electronic environment that is available to and easily accessible by each employee and is structured to provide immediate, individualized on-line access to the full range of information, software, guidance, advice and assistance, data, images, tools, and assessment and monitoring systems to permit job performance with minimal support and intervention by others.

This could be categorized as a job aid (i.e., in column two) or part of computer-based training (i.e., in column four) component. The next block in succession describes the interactivity as between the learner and the material in order to internalize (i.e., retain and or retrieve) knowledge. In this instance, assessment does not apply and the outcome is to provide reference material when needed.

#### Title 31 and SAR

This topic has a combination of information and task-driven qualities but not applicable to every new employee. For example, Title 31 and SAR are of little learning value to someone who will be working in Food and Beverage or Facilities Maintenance. According to the Internal Revenue Service (2008), the short definition of Title 31 and SAR involves anti-money laundering and suspicious activity reporting respectively. This is useful information for an employee working in Cage Operations that requires specific knowledge and skills.

An alternative pathway to consider is distributing reference material to everyone about Title 31 and SAR but only require those employees directly affected to complete a self-paced computer-based training module (see Figure 5). The darker outlined blocks in column two under

information-driven and asynchronous apply to everyone. The horizontal pathway is taken by those whose job is directly affected by the subject matter. The content may require a combination of reference materials, forms, job-coaching, and computer-based training for certification purposes. Due to the specificity, factual nature, and legal implications of the subject matter, CD-ROM based learning is an attractive viable option to consider. This is a self-paced highly interactive format that could enhance learner retention at a relatively low-cost. This would save time, cut costs, provide a measurable tracking component and possibly enhance learner satisfaction and performance.

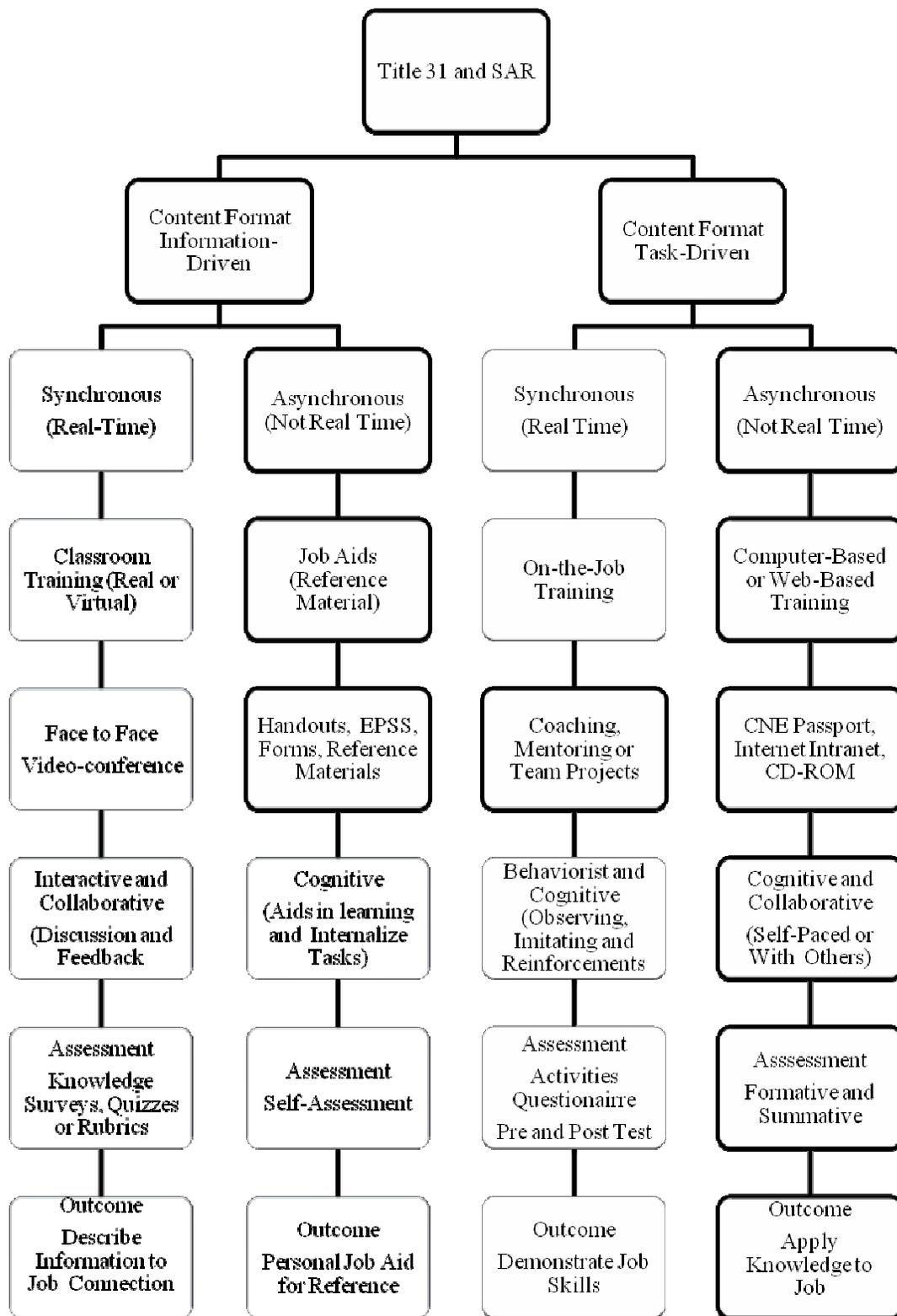


Figure 5. CNE Blended Learning Model: Title 31 and SAR by P. Washington (2009)

## Conclusion

The four examples outlined summarize how to utilize this model to map each topic by first identifying if the content is information or task-driven. The second decision is to identify whether learning should occur synchronously or asynchronously. The third decision is the appropriate media delivery method. Next is considering the context of which knowledge transfer takes place. The next decision is the interactivity that best promotes learner retention and cognitive reinforcement. The assessment tools chosen should not only measure learner competence but offer feedback to strengthen weak areas of instructional strategy. Finally, the outcome will reveal whether the learning objective has been achieved based on how well the employee demonstrates new knowledge and skills to the job.

The current two day CNE employee orientation training program can be reduced to one day for all new employees but extended for some depending on job classification. Computer-based training, for some new employees, would be appropriate for those components that are job specific and or require certification. This would include alcohol certification, gambling awareness, Title 31, and SAR. Video-conferencing would reduce travel expenses incurred by subject matter experts for topics that require detailed special knowledge transfer. The same considerations for utilizing a blended learning approach may be applied to other advanced training modules in the future.

Unlike educational institutions, corporate training exists to improve company performance and increase the bottom line. The recommendations of utilizing the blended learning model in this paper are consistent with Cherokee Nation Enterprises directives of working smarter to reduce costs and improve company performance. In addition, it adheres to the company principles regarding employees by recognizing that learning is an on-going event and to help employees realize their full potential through education, training and development. Finally, it is aligned with

Cherokee Nation Enterprises' long-term goals of building a superior employee work force.

(Employee Handbook, 2003, p.4)

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