

# *Methodology and online learning*

## **Church based training**

One of the most important factors is the need to keep TEE courses church based even when given online. An implication could be that when you move your learning online, a TEE course is no longer rooted in the local church. So when members continue with blended learning, this is something that needs to be worked out.

A three way agreement is necessary between the church, the local TEE team and the learner, so that the parties can make the necessary arrangements to keep the learning church-based.

## **Using the right tool for the right course**



Bachelor courses work really well on Moodle, because there are many options for background reading and longer assignments. For this reason bachelor level courses are more helpful to do on PC's than on smartphones.

To work well with Moodle an organisation needs to have an IT specialist, this can be an extra investment if you don't have the IT skills in the team already, but it is necessary for things to run well. There are Christian organizations to help with this, for example Horizon Education

Network ([www.horizoneducationnetwork.org](http://www.horizoneducationnetwork.org))

Schoology ([www.schoology.com](http://www.schoology.com)) is an app that works well on smartphones. This is a learning environment (not just a video tool) that connects several tools to give you a distant learning set up that works for you. Smartphones are going to be the future of TEE, especially in Asia where so many people have them.

There are of course other options, some free, some that require payment.

## **Security**

In many countries it is wise to think about online security and the safety of students. Google products, like Google Classroom, Google Meet, are quite secure from a hacker perspective. However if governments want to gain access to data collected by Google, it is not unusual for Google to share it.

So TEE organisations in more sensitive countries need to consider this. A solution could be to register students using pseudonyms and store their personal data somewhere else, but not online.

In some countries, like in the Middle East, some believers prefer not to log onto Christian websites for security issues.

Teams should consider using websites and tools with a neutral tone or use encrypted data. There are safe tools available but research is necessary in order to find what suits your goals and learners.

## Discussion

If you move all your discussion online instead of doing small groups, there are implications. In Online Learning we distinguish **synchronous and asynchronous discussion**.

An example of synchronous discussion is a video call with several people, and you can react immediately to what is being said. An example of asynchronous discussion is a WhatsApp group, where people type in what they think whenever they have a free moment. The reaction to others does not happen immediately when something is said.



Moodle works with discussion forums, this is also a good example of asynchronous discussion. The advantage of this is that people can work remotely, which is helpful for diaspora TEE, or for groups that cannot meet because they are too far apart. It is also valuable for BA and MA level courses, because often students will type longer responses and think carefully before they respond to the questions.

An implication could be that when you move all your discussion and learning online, a TEE course is no longer rooted in the local church – this is traditionally one of the main features of TEE, and considered as one of the most important aspects of impactful TEE.

When the whole country is in lockdown, the majority of people have more time on their hands: no one travels to work, no one is going to the gym, etc. But when life returns to normal, people may lose the opportunity for synchronous discussion via Zoom or Skype, what happens then? Asynchronous discussion is still possible then.

Being a group leader online requires different skills and a different effort than being a group leader of a group that meets in person. An online student needs different motivation to keep going and the feedback in a different format requires new skills.