Chapter 18
Traditional to Hybrid:
Social Media's Role in Reshaping Instruction in Higher Education

Rowena Li
Queens College, City University of New York, USA

ABSTRACT

Drawn from first-hand teaching and learning experiences, this chapter seeks to explore social media tools and their unique features in adapting traditional face-to-face courses to the hybrid learning environment. It examines the transformed roles of instructors and students, as well as their changing pedagogical, social, and psychological needs. It also demonstrates how social media can be used to meet the challenges of both hybrid and online instruction in higher education. This chapter provides faculty, administrators, and practitioners a better understanding of the roles of the instructors and students in a hybrid setting and also offers guidance to instructors on how to involve social media tools in a hybrid learning environment to enhance students' learning experiences.

INTRODUCTION

With the advent of digital information and communication technologies, online learning has shown rapid growth in American colleges and universities over the past decade. According to the annual report on online education in the United States analyzed by the Babson Survey Research Group in conjunction with the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation:

- Over 5.6 million students were taking at least one online course during the Fall 2009 term; nearly one million students more than the number in the 2008 report.
- The 21% growth rate for online enrollments far exceeds the less than 2% growth of the overall higher education student population.
- Nearly 30% of higher education students now take at least one course online (Allen & Seaman, 2010, p. 2).

As online education has grown rapidly, the concomitant emergence of hybrid/blended learning in higher education should not be ignored. A survey found that 80% of higher education institutions offer hybrid/blended learning courses, with research institutions being the highest at 93% (Arabasz, Boggs, & Baker, 2003).

Hybrid/Blended Learning and Course Management Systems

Hybrid/blended learning combines face-to-face and online instruction (Graham, 2006; Mason, 2009; Vignare, 2007). It is designed so that a significant amount of classroom learning activities are replaced by online learning activities with the support of advanced information and communication technologies such as online audio and visual components, social media tools, and mobile devices, which results in reduced classroom time. According to the *Eighth Annual Sloan Survey of Online Learning*, hybrid/blended learning is defined as having 30-79% of the content delivered online to reduce face-to-face instruction time (Allen & Seaman, 2010). As Vaughan (2007) argues, simply using online elements as supplements to face-to-face instruction is not hybrid learning. Hybrid learning invariably involves less face-to-face instruction time due to the use of computer and information technologies. These hybrid courses are different from Web-facilitated learning, which is a traditional face-to-face course with Web-based activities to augment in-person delivery (Allen & Seaman, 2010).

Hybrid/blended learning has a number of advantages over traditional and fully online learning. Studies show that students learn more in a hybrid environment (DeLacey & Leonard, 2002; Graham & Dziuban, 2008). Interaction and contact among students and between students and instructors is increased through the effective integration and application of communication technology (DeLacey & Leonard, 2002; Garnham & Kaleta, 2002). Students also feel a strong sense of community (Rovai & Jordan, 2004). In addition, hybrid learning saves time and offers flexibility (Shea, 2007; Vaughan, 2007). Students often have other responsibilities which require them to be in a certain place at a certain time. Hybrid learning gives students the opportunity to learn on their own time and at their own pace. They do not have to be in the classroom as often, which reduces the cost and time involved in commuting and parking.

As some learning materials are provided in the online learning environment, students may access them and participate in discussions online at any time or any place, which creates accessibility and flexibility (Dziuban, Moskal, & Hartman, 2005; Graham & Dziuban, 2008). Hybrid learning also frees up classroom space (Dziuban et al., 2005; Shea, 2007). With face-to-face instruction sessions being reduced in hybrid courses, a classroom may accommodate several courses each semester. This helps ease the demand somewhat for classroom space. However, hybrid learning still presents significant challenges. For students, their technology skills, social and psychological needs, and study habits, decide whether they are able to adapt to this special learning environment and be in favor of it after using it. For instructors, the major challenges lie in the need for more preparation time, better organizational skills, constant online presence, and transparency.

Online proprietary course management systems, such as *WebCT®*, *Blackboard®*, *Elluminate®*, and *eCollege®* are often used to support hybrid/blended learning efforts. These online course management systems are specially designed and developed as platforms to facilitate syllabi and assignment uploads, and for posting announcements along with the course calendar, discussion boards, mail system, and live chat. They also provide assessment tools, including a grade center, survey center, test manager, and usage statistics. In recent years, several social media tools, such as blogs, wikis, instant messaging, and *iTunes U®* have been integrated into the course tool area to enhance the students' online learning experience. The use of

Related Content

Aspects of Content Generation Through Narrative Communication and Simulation

Takashi Ogataand Shin Asakawa (2018). *Content Generation Through Narrative Communication and Simulation (pp. 1-47).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/aspects-of-content-generation-through-narrative-communication-and-simulation/200227

Salience, Self-Salience, and Discursive Opportunities: An Effective Media Presence Construction Through Social Media in the Peruvian Presidential Election

Eduardo Villanueva-Mansilla (2020). *Using New Media for Citizen Engagement and Participation (pp. 240-255).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/salience-self-salience-and-discursive-opportunities/246693

Reshaping of Museums With Experiences: An Examination on the Hatay Archeology Museum

Serpil Kir Elita (2021). *Impact of New Media in Tourism (pp. 75-87).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/reshaping-of-museums-with-experiences/272419

Narratives of an Artificial Agent: Mental World and Narrating

Taisuke Akimoto (2018). *Content Generation Through Narrative Communication and Simulation (pp. 241-264).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/narratives-of-an-artificial-agent/200235

New Formulas of Interactive Entertainment: From Advergaming to Metaverse as an Advertising Strategy

Gema Bonales-Daimiel (2023). *Handbook of Research on the Future of Advertising and Brands in the New Entertainment Landscape (pp. 76-103).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/new-formulas-of-interactive-entertainment/316988