

Chapter 17

Designing Blended Learning Strategies for Rich Content

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ABSTRACT

Today, an immense amount of photorealistic and high quality medical information circulates over the Internet, whether copyright protected and distributed under license from learning portals or simply freely available. Certified textual data along with audiovisual material that has been gathered from medical professional practices may be used for the production of learning objects for multimedia learning. The use of Content Management Systems (CMS) and Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) allow a vast array of images, videos, animations and sounds to be offered through e-Learning. In many professions, e-Learning is the norm. Accordingly, in medicine there is a tendency to blend in the first years of study more and more online material that leads to extensive multimedia learning. However, not all clinical courses within hospitals and examinations can be replaced by media rich content.

INTRODUCTION

The “new” classroom is characterized by a plethora of technological tools: whiteboards, smart phones, tablets, laptops, computers, smart TV sets and many other devices (depending on the subject taught) that have almost become a necessity for the teaching process. While formal education has moved decisively to massive blended learning environments, informal education is soaring and penetrating even larger audiences. Today, a major part of the world population owns smart mobile devices (Lunden, 2015), deploying ubiquitous online availability, while social media of any kind are continuously expanding and proving to be a major driving force for communication and information exchange in unprecedented volumes (Cap, 2014).

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The facts are undeniable, for the first world, virtually every learner is potentially an active participant of more than one online learning environments. The academic community cannot ignore these facts, and there is an increasing pressure for instructors to incorporate rich content Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) into teaching. As far as education is concerned, the classroom no longer has walls and boundaries; young learners who lived through the information era are considered digital natives, while older individuals go back to school via MOOCs for refurbishment of their certified skills (Liyana Gunawardena, Adams & Williams, 2013).

BACKGROUND

This chapter aims to analyze the new environment that is being shaped in education management systems (van Dam, 2004). It predominantly relies on learning management systems (LMSs) that deploy modules of rich content. Having already plunged into a world that is nearly irreversibly and ubiquitously online, momentum continues with the dynamic appearance of three key characteristics, which readily promote an idealistic status quo for e-Learning:

1. **The Social Meaning - What Motivates People to Engage in e-Learning:** MOOCs seem to endorse not only a culture of massive, unbounded training, but they also promote the pedagogical significance of mobile communication and learning as a vehicle evangelizing changes toward student-centered instruction. Indeed, learning is facilitated by portable instrumentation and this results in increased student interest, confidence and participation. By their very nature, massive participation easily exceeds in numbers the next closest contender (Meixler, 2013).
2. **The Economic Meaning - the Marketing Approach:** There is now an unprecedented ease in handling high-definition material, in terms of image or sound quality, along with vivid animations of inner core information (Politis, Tsalighopoul, & Kyriafinis, 2015). This allows for rich content development within a cost-effective environment. It is amazing that many auxiliary educational services such as Academia.edu are able to deliver more high quality copyrighted resources than classic education seems to consider (Boynton, 2004; van Dam, 2004). In short, rich content enhances the business impact of e-Learning.
3. **The Educational Meaning - Media and Tools that Enhance Learner Perspectives:** An increasingly larger array of digital services reshapes the way in which a remote user senses that he/she is the focal point of their university. In some cases, remote learners indulge in services that the regular student enjoys at a far greater cost; even further, remote learners may be eligible to access content that classic universities may have difficulties in making accessible to all of their students. It is clear for conventional education, with what ever designation we may append to its long established practices, that it should promote the hubs of a knowledge society (Jennex & Olfman, 2006) along with the pedagogical exploitation of mobile devices, that promote dynamic training and instructive processes (Sclater, 2010).

Amidst economic crises that result in streamlined educational procedures, e-Learning takes advantage of its core competency. That competency means that the learner and the instructor need not be in the same city or even the same country, to offer a multitude of operational resources that have an impressive return on investment (OECD, 2000). It had not been possible to transfer knowledge over virtual networks

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