

Chapter 8

Fusion Learning: An Online Blended Pedagogy

ABSTRACT

Asynchronous delivery is not suitable for borderless online degrees because of the diversity in student languages, academic backgrounds, learning styles, and cultures. These differences will add to students' sense of isolation, which will result in high attrition rates. Blended learning would be a satisfactory delivery method, except that it will be impractical for many students. Fusion learning is an alternative Internet-based methodology that melds online with face-to-face sessions within the distance learning course. Fusion classes can increase motivation, commitment, and retention. In the fusion learning classroom, the management system is the repository for information, and the fusion classroom is the place where students develop socialization, communication, and analysis skills. The ability to provide online learning with weekly live classes in multiple countries creates a unique global learning experience.

INTRODUCTION

An unsolved concern about distance learning is the absence of face-to-face interaction. One of the earliest concerns of faculty teaching online was the lack of connection with students (Bruner, 2007). The use of asynchronous discussion questions and team activities did not relieve faculty concerns or result

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in improved student performance, progress, or satisfaction. Asynchronous distance learning limits opportunities to develop communication, analysis, and socialization, and communication skills. Universities that offer borderless online degrees will have to convince the market that online graduates have the same skills as students that completed on-campus degrees. According to Allen, Seaman, Lederman, and Jaschik (2013), nearly 2/3 of professors agree that learning outcomes are superior in face-to-face versions of the same courses taught online. However, faculty and administrators continue to have a favorable view of blended learning.

The lack of live interaction with classmates and the instructor contributes to high levels of attrition (Bettinger, Fox, Loeb, & Taylor, 2017; Kanwar, Carr, Ortlieb, & Mohee, 2018). Van Roekel (2011) and also noted that the lack of socialization in online courses is positively associated with attrition. Arkorful and Abaidoo (2015) surmised that asynchronous delivery might degrade learner communication skills because of the absence of discussions and opportunities to work in face-to-face teams. Online learning is a solitary activity with very little opportunity for prompt feedback. As a result, it requires time- and emotional-management skills (Kauffman, 2015). The problem is even worse in remedial courses because online students need stronger time management skills (Bawa, 2016; Tucker, 2012). LeBlanc (2018, December 20), argued that on-campus classes are not demonstrably better than online. However, that assertion does not fit with the high attrition rates in online courses. Allen, Seaman, Poulin, and Straut (2016) reported that only 29.1% of chief academic officers believe that their faculty accepts that online courses are legitimate. Jaggars (2014) reported that students took the easier courses, and took the harder courses face to face because they needed greater access to the teacher for help.

Blended learning, also called hybrid learning, is a mixture of online and face-to-face delivery (Dziuban, Graham, Moskal, Norberg, & Sicilia, 2018). Face-to-face courses are increasingly becoming hybrid because it makes the face-to-face classroom more effective and can shorten the amount of time spent in the classroom. At the same time, many distance-learning programs at community colleges and public universities have moved from online to blended learning to improve student retention and pass rates, and to teach skills that are better-learned face to face. The decision to go blended was not easy. Just as BMW is synonymous with the slogan, the ultimate driving

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