

Chapter 9

An Academic Solution: Fusion Learning Activities

ABSTRACT

Teaching, like golf, requires a bag of clubs. There are the drivers to deliver information, strengthen thinking, and build student skills. The putter and the wedge serve to motive students and keep them engaged. This chapter, written for teachers, gives practical examples of how to mix and match the face-to-face, blended, and fusion classrooms to improve learning outcomes. The development of the online pedagogy began while managing the first distance-learning program at a U.S. community college. The research continued for a decade more while beginning online learning at university in the South Pacific that delivered training to 10 developing nations. That research was followed by a four-year pilot study that created fusion classes to improve the performance of doctoral candidates enrolled in an online doctoral program.

INTRODUCTION

Educational technology has transformed teaching and learning. The teacher no longer is the purveyor of knowledge. Today's learners have more information available on their cell phones than the Apollo astronauts had as they traveled to the moon. Information is cheap. The role of the teacher has changed from disseminating knowledge to teach students how to information to solve problems and find solutions. Every student with a computer or a mobile phone has access to information. The days of sitting in class and

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taking copious notes get to pass exams is over. The latest journal articles and reports are now downloadable. The classroom and the library have become portable. The depth and breadth of knowledge once locked in the classroom and library reading rooms is now available on any computer connected to the Internet. Class sessions are recorded, and libraries are accessible 24/7 on mobile devices.

The increased access to information is revolutionary. Just 50 years ago, an astronomy student, asked to decide whether to travel to Mars was practical, had to find a text that contained the distance to Mars to calculate the round-trip travel time. Today, the student can Google the information online or just ask their mobile phone, “How long does it take to travel to Mars?” The role of professors has changed from information providers to problem solvers. Teachers help students learn to use the information to solve problems, analyze, and develop creative solutions. Industry seeks workers that can work in teams, make presentations, and help build better products. Online, asynchronous courses that consist of submitting assignments and engaging in online chats do not develop the needed work skills, motivate students, or promote online success. Distance learning must also include live classroom experiences that approximate the on-campus classroom to develop student proficiency in critical thinking, team building, and creativity.

With increased worldwide access to the Internet and educational technology, distance learning can become a cost-effective global solution to increase access to education. Currently, that is not the case. Only 25% of community college students taking a two-year degree graduated in six years (Juszkiewicz, 2017, November). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2018), universities experience similar attrition rates, with only 60% of the students completing a 4-year bachelor’s degree within 6 years.

In this chapter, a variety of teaching techniques are reviewed that can improve the effectiveness of online learning without needing to add on-campus classes (blended learning). Challenges in providing local teachers and classroom facilities are a major challenge in developing nations that do not have the educational infrastructure. Nevertheless, synchronous pedagogy is essential because nearly two-thirds of professors teaching online viewed online-learning outcomes inferior to face-to-face courses, and nearly 75% of respondents reported that online assessment methods were inadequate (Allen, Seaman, Lederman, & Jaschik, 2013). In the same study, online faculty reported concerns about the quality of online learning outcomes. In a survey of faculty

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