Chapter 10
A Case Study of a Blended Doctoral Program in Educational Technology

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ABSTRACT

Educational technology is a hands-on, minds-on discipline that emphasizes knowing and doing. In this field, doctoral education needs to reflect digital and communication realities in the twenty-first century. In this case study, a blended learning approach to graduate education in educational technology is explored from the perspective of the author's own classroom. The course design and blended delivery of an Advanced Concepts in Educational Technology seminar is described in detail. Active learning opportunities, using wikis, blogs, avatars and virtual worlds, learning managements systems, email, and face-to-face learning experiences engaged doctoral students in the collaborative investigation and critique of educational technology trends and research ideas. Doctoral students investigated their emerging digital lives as scholars and developed a personal cyberinfrastructure that they can continue to build, modify, and extend throughout their educational technology careers.

INTRODUCTION

Cloud based computing, the open-source and open-content movements, social networking and mobile technologies transform the ways people can work, learn, and communicate in higher education. Educational technologies both enable and require new approaches to teaching, learning and assessment that transcend hierarchical, industrial-based content delivery models that have characterized the campus experience for the past century. Delicious, Google, Blogger, Moodle, Wikipedia, YouTube, Ning, iMovie, Facebook, Twitter, iPod, iPhone, iPad, all help to map new terrain in instant, interactive, creative and collaborative knowledge building communities.

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Educational technology is focused primarily on how people learn and then making computers and networks support and extend that learning. For educators who believe delivering content and testing recall equals learning, educational technology is not a great fit. For those who see their role as designing and creating innovative and dynamic blended learning experiences and environments by putting powerful media in the hands of students, educational technology is a natural and life-giving fit (Jacobsen & Kopp, 2008). As an educational technology scholar, I have observed how computers and networks open the door to powerful new ideas and learning practices first-hand in hundreds of classrooms through my research. In this case study, I explore in-depth an example of blended graduate education in educational technology from the perspective of my blended doctoral course.

Blended learning is defined as the combination of face-to-face and online learning experiences (Williams, 2002). Face-to-face activities can support the online activities or vice versa, depending on the emphasis placed on the two options for engagement (Crichton & Childs, 2008). The goal of a blended course should be to combine the best features of in class teaching with the best features of online learning to promote active, self-directed learning opportunities for students with added flexibility (Garnham & Kaleta, 2002). Garrison and Vaughan (2008) operationally define blended learning as "the organic integration of thoughtfully selected and complementary face-to-face and online approaches and technologies" (p. 148). For the purposes of this chapter, blended learning is defined along a continuum from chiefly face-to-face, co-located learning opportunities on campus supplemented with online activities and tasks, to primarily online learning experiences supplemented with real time interaction using teleconferencing, video-conferencing and online conferencing.

RETHINKING DOCTORAL EDUCATION

In educational technology, we know that doctoral education needs to be reshaped for the twenty-first century. "New technologies are altering and accelerating the way knowledge is shared and developed. And the marketplace for scholars and scholarship is now thoroughly global" (Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel & Hutchings, 2008, p. 2). The growing reliance on the Internet and social networking tools for collaboration, sharing, creating and communicating knowledge in the developed world often exists in sharp and painful contrast to the paucity of meaningful and reliable access to the Internet in many developing countries and contexts (Marshall, Kinuthia & Taylor, 2009). In short, education needs educational technology leaders and researchers who understand what has gone before in order to design and develop what is needed next in a technology enabled, knowledge society.

Helping people to learn is the primary and essential purpose of any educational technology (Janusewski & Molenda, 2008). From its beginnings in educational film and radio, through the audio-visual era and then personal computing and the Internet, the field of educational technology has shaped and has been shaped by an "increased awareness of the difference between the mere retention of information for testing purposes and the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes used beyond classroom walls" (Janusewski & Molenda, 2008, p. 4). As our theories about knowledge change in concert with rapid advancements in educational technology, the field needs to consider the political, social, economic and cultural implications for learners and for learning in diverse international contexts, and that requires that the field itself examines how we prepare the next generation of educational technology scholars and leaders.

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