

Blackboard and the Blended Learning Format

ブラックボードラーンとブレンディッド・ラーニングの教法

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Abstract: Blackboard Learn, formerly Blackboard Learning Management System, is a virtual learning platform and course management system which allows integration with student and teacher information. Blended learning is an accepted, quickly developing instructional model. The blended learning platform is proving great success in assisting institutions to handle the challenges of limited resources, student achievement, and the expectations of modern technological learners.

Keywords: Blackboard Learning Management, blended learning, e-learning

要旨

以前は Blackboard Learning Management System と言われていた Blackboard Learn は、学生と教員の情報を一つにする仮想学習の場であり管理システムである。ブレンド型学習（ある科目の教育プログラムのなかに一部だけでもオンライン教育の要素を取り入れた教育方法）は急速に発展している教育モデルとして受け入れられている。限られた学習資源や学生の学力を掘り起こすこと、最新技術を使って学ぶ学生たちへの期待を扱うことによって大学等を支えることで、ブレンド型学習は大きな成功を上げつつある。

キーワード：ブラックボードラーン、学習管理システム、ブレンディッド・ラーニング、オンライン研修

The fundamentals of modern pedagogy

Blackboard (Bb) is an effective tool in both traditional face-to-face and online classrooms. Blackboard Learn, formerly Blackboard Learning Management System, is a virtual learning platform and course management system which allows integration with student and teacher information. If an instructor adopts Blackboard (Bb), he or she will quickly discover ways to integrate its components. First, the instructor would assign a weekly discussion question for students to submit their individual opinions. Then, students interact by commenting on three different responses to exchange ideas. However, the significant savings in time is achieved through restructuring elements of your classes to fully engage with these components. That may require rethinking the methods you use to communicate with your students (e.g., using Bb postings for class messages rather than e-mail) and the expectations or behavior you expect from your students in order to maximize your communication process. Presently, with Blackboard (Bb) more commonly implemented among blended instructors; more students attend classes prepared with the expectations of revised curriculums and pedagogy that utilizes Blackboard components (Eduviews, 2009).

Blended learning, the instructional method that incorporates pedagogy from both traditional face-to-face and

online learning, is a quickly developing instructional model that is rapidly becoming widely accepted. The blended learning platform is proving great success in assisting institutions to handle the challenges of limited resources, student achievement, and the expectations of modern technological learners. There are many educational advantages including: providing 24/7 access to course materials, enabling student-centered teaching approaches, reducing administrative costs around course management, and enhancing student-to-student and faculty-to-student communication (Blackboard, 1999).

A growing demand for the blended learning platform

The modern student of the digital age expects their learning environment to incorporate technological pedagogy simply because it is an intrinsic part of their lives (Eduviews, 2009). Today's students demand the ability to control their own learning environment. According to a survey, secondary school students were asked how learning through online classes would create a more attractive learning platform. The following were the results: 47 percent of students from grades 9 to 12, 39 percent of students from grades 6 to 8, and 25 percent of students from grades 3 to 5 preferred to study online for greater control of individual learning experiences (Eduviews, 2009).

In general, students do not expect online curriculums to be less challenging. However, students do expect the online learning environment to facilitate their achievements because they would have access to review lesson materials upon request and the platform would create a more comfortable atmosphere to request help from instructors. The blended learning environment provides personalized learning which allows thoughtful reflection, and differentiates instruction from student-to-student across a diverse group of learners. Furthermore, online instructors engender tremendous benefits for students immersed in online learning environments. Based on the survey, 76 percent of instructors agreed that online learning platforms offer great advantages to students by allowing more control of individual learning experiences (Eduviews, 2009).

In addition, San Diego State University offers a unique perspective on blended learning. In the university's online Encyclopedia of Education Technology, the article Blended Learning Solutions notes, "...blended learning combines the engaging benefits of traditional instructor-led training with the advantages brought by a variety of technologies to create an optimum program" (Eduviews, 2009). The article also emphasizes that many elements can comprise a blended learning model, including instructor-delivered content, e-learning, webinars, conference calls, and live or online sessions with instructors.

Blended learning models

Generally, there are three fundamental models of blended learning with several overlapping variations (MacEwan Faculty Commons, 2009).

The Supplemental Model

The supplemental model retains the fundamental core of the traditional classroom program—that is, students and teachers meet in a classroom for study. At the same time, it utilizes technology resources to supplement traditional lectures and textbooks. The blended learning incorporates technological pedagogy into the instructional procedure although does not change its fundamental structure. Students are required to complete online reading assignments or activities, or participate in interactive forums. However, there is no reduction time in face-to-face sessions under the supplemental model; a three-hour program would still meet in-class for three hours per week.

The Replacement Model

The replacement model suggests classroom time traditionally done in a face-to-face environment has been transferred to instructional procedures through the online Blackboard (Bb). The basic question is determining an effective ratio of the instructional time between the two learning formats. Due to the uniqueness of each program, there is no “correct” ratio (Eduviews, 2009). For example, one lesson per week may be replaced with online individual assignments. In a group assignment, face-to-face sessions may be suspended for up to 2 to 3 weeks. Therefore, to determine the appropriate distribution of instructional time it would depend on the course objectives.

The replacement model reduces the number of face-to-face sessions, or classroom “seat-time,” and:

- replaces some face-to-face time with online, interactive learning activities
- produces substantial changes in remaining face-to-face sessions such as a focus on student presentations.

Under a replacement model, there are fundamental alterations to the curriculum. Unlike the supplemental model, the online resources in a replacement model are fully integrated into the overall instructional process. The online content acts as a replacement for instructional time that would have been engaged in a traditional classroom. Consequently, the nature of the face-to-face activities is also replaced. Instead of traditional lectures, face-to-face time is freed for more interactive, collaborative learning opportunities.

The Emporium Model

The emporium model eliminates all class sessions and replaces them with a learning resource center. This resource center, normally a large computer lab, provides access to online program materials in addition to live advice and assistance.

The emporium model is a radical reconceptualization of the traditional curriculum. Though attendance at the learning center may be required, there are no longer lectures in a traditional, face-to-face format. Course materials are delivered through online resources, and in-person assistance is available in the learning resource center.

Students spend considerable time and money, including exerting substantial effort in obtaining a quality education and should perceive their post-secondary educational experiences as being of high value. Therefore, student satisfaction is important because it influences the student’s level of motivation, which is an important psychological factor in student success (American Psychological Association, 1997). Meeting and exceeding the students’ expectation not only satisfies students but also lead them to become advocates who provide a free

promotion source for the university.

Summary

From improving and expanding modern learning platforms for students, offering educators new pedagogy for personalizing instructional approaches, and delivering greater effectiveness in professional development, blended learning has established itself as a respected and successful learning model. Blended learning provides institutions with a strategy for overcoming the challenges presented through budget cuts, limited resources, and time constraints. Although there are choices in how to implement blended learning models, there is not one single best platform. Through the insights of educators, the ideal blended learning model is the one that applies best for instructors and students in their specific environment and that handles their particular needs at the time. The blended learning models are expansive and flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of learning needs and approaches. Blended learning is a proven and effective approach to deliver high quality instruction that provides instructors and students a technology-driven platform toward student achievement and richer, more rewarding learning experiences.

Key Terms

Blackboard (Bb): virtual learning classroom and course management system

e-learning: studying at home using computers and courses on the internet

webinar: group of people study and discuss a subject on the internet

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