Identifying Key Stakeholders in Blended Tertiary Environments: Experts’ Perspectives

Kimberley Tuapawa, University of Newcastle, Newcastle, Australia

ABSTRACT

Although key stakeholders in blended tertiary environments (BTEs) fulfil an extraordinary role in higher education, significant gaps in knowledge about their identities may be impeding the provision of stakeholder support, limiting their ability to promote effective learning and teaching. As online growth intensifies, it is critical that tertiary education institutes (TEIs) address these gaps in knowledge by developing their understandings of key stakeholder identities. This paper re-evaluates the identity of key stakeholders in BTEs, and describes their contributions. Through qualitatively designed semi-structured interviews with 13 blended learning experts from New Zealand, Australia and Canada, and a 5-step analysis of data, it verified and proposed a current list of key stakeholders in BTEs. This included teachers, senior management staff, students, technical support staff, educational support staff, the institute, other support staff, government bodies, technology infrastructure providers, communities, and the public. Some were considered to be among those who contributed most significantly to BTE success. As learning spaces evolve and technology usage accelerates, the outcomes from this research will provide a basis from which TEIs can develop new understandings about their key stakeholders, to help them deliver informed, relevant, and meaningful support.

KEYWORDS

Blended Learning, E-Learning, Higher Education, Stakeholder, Students, Teachers, Tertiary Education

INTRODUCTION

Key stakeholders have contributed significantly to the success of digital transformations, fulfilling an extraordinary role in the advancement of higher education. In an era of phenomenal growth, their commitment to the use of educational online technologies (EOTs) has helped transform traditional learning spaces into dynamic blended tertiary environments (BTEs). Attitudinal factors of flexibility, innovativeness and creativity have stimulated levels of acceptance of online engagement, prompting an increase in interactivity and “collaboration” (Theriault, 2015). For tertiary education institutes (TEIs), this has increased the range of learning and teaching opportunities, enabling them to swiftly adapt to the changing needs of a digitally native generation, and thus ensure institutional relevance in an era of dramatic change.
In this context, TEIs bear responsibility for ensuring their key stakeholders receive an appropriate level of support to fulfil their roles. In fact, “having knowledge of stakeholders will always be an important responsibility” for TEIs (Avci, Ring, & Mitchelli, 2015, p. 53). It is achievable when TEIs understand the role of “knowledge management” as it relates to the capabilities of their people, and the complexities of their environments (Maric, 2013). This involves identifying and analysing their key stakeholders, “to realise who [they] are, and what they want” (Maric, 2013, p. 223), and then “improv[ing] its processes to meet their needs” (Kettunen, 2015, p. 56).

TEIs that “can identify and understand the[ir] stakeholders…can greatly enrich their knowledge” (Avci et al., 2015, p. 53), whereas “neglecting stakeholder relationships” will “lead to limited success” (Kettunen, 2015, p. 56). Significant gaps in knowledge about stakeholders’ identities and contributions may impede the provision of appropriate support, and limit their ability to perform their roles effectively. Establishing stakeholders’ identities, and determining the extent to which their needs and activities are understood and supported is therefore critical. As online growth intensifies and changes the contexts of learning, it is essential that TEIs address knowledge gaps and develop understandings about stakeholder groups at a level that enables the delivery of informed, relevant, and meaningful support. This paper re-evaluates the identity of key stakeholders in BTEs, and describes their contributions.

While some efforts have been made to better understand key stakeholder roles, the numbers of studies about their identification are relatively few. Mainardes, Alves & Raposo (2013), in a theoretical exploratory case study, identified and ranked 21 distinct groups of university stakeholders. Chapleo and Simms (2010), through stakeholder analysis, identified and ranked 10 higher education groups. Wagner, Hassanein & Head (2008) compiled a stakeholder list of at least seven groups, and Sanderson (1997) identified more than 15 distance education stakeholders. An overview of the results from these four studies is outlined in Table 1.

In these studies, students and teachers were featured as the most dominant stakeholders. Bodies supplying accreditation or some form of governance also held top positions, and providers of media, technology and funders factored in significantly. Other key groups included local and educational communities.

Additional literature further developed a picture of stakeholder representation in higher education. Gross & Godwin (2005) recommended that higher education stakeholder analysis should begin with the “obvious and well-known stakeholders: students, faculty, and administrators” (p. 1). Similarly, it was noted that in educational institutions, the most important stakeholders were “students, staff, administration and employers” (Singh & Weligamage, 2012, p. 5). Coleman et al

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research approach</th>
<th>Stakeholders identified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainardes, et al., (2013) Theoretical exploratory case study (ranked, top 10)</td>
<td>Students, teachers, researchers, employers, research and development partners, government, accreditation bodies, local public authorities, non-teaching staff, other higher education institutes, local community, secondary level schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapleo &amp; Simms (2010) Case study and stakeholder analysis (ranked, top 10)</td>
<td>Students, staff, funders, commercial, government, community, governing and academic bodies, research councils and bodies, educational community, graduate recruiters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanderson (1997) Case studies and literature (not ranked)</td>
<td>Regulators, purchasers, suppliers (creators and providers: content providers, learning experts, designers, media providers, admin support, HR, technical providers, site coordinators), end users (teachers and learners)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagner et.al (2008) Literature and stakeholder analysis (not ranked)</td>
<td>Students, instructors, educational institution, content providers, technologies providers, accreditation bodies, employers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Results from existing studies
11 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the product's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/article/identifying-key-stakeholders-in-blended-tertiary-environments/187019?camid=4v1


www.igi-global.com/e-resources/library-recommendation/?id=2

Related Content

Mobile Applications in Higher Education: Implications for Teaching and Learning

www.igi-global.com/article/mobile-applications-in-higher-education/217470?camid=4v1a
Benchmarking Online Learning Practices in Higher Education: Software Selection, Teacher Preparation, and Course Evaluation
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/benchmarking-online-learning-practices-higher/50179?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/benchmarking-online-learning-practices-higher/50179?camid=4v1a)

Supporting Arguments for Including the Teaching of Team Competency Principles in Higher Education
[www.igi-global.com/article/supporting-arguments-including-teaching-team/2309?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/supporting-arguments-including-teaching-team/2309?camid=4v1a)

Detection of Misconceptions and Misleading Questions by Using Quantitative Diagnostic Assessment