Chapter 21

Blended Learning Systems: New Directions in Graduate Management Education

Owen P. Hall Jr.
Pepperdine University, USA

ABSTRACT

Distance learning has come a long way since Sir Isaac Pitman initiated the first correspondence course in the early 1840s. Today the growing role of globalization calls for new and innovative learning systems for management education. To meet these challenges the traditional classroom model for delivering executive business education is giving way to a more holistic learning paradigm in which both the pedagogical and andragogical focus are on knowledge acquisition and management decision-making. The one-size-fits-all educational approach of the past is being supplanted by customized, web-based learning systems. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce a blended learning system that combines the best of both web-based learning and time-honed classroom practices for delivering cost-effective graduate management education.

INTRODUCTION

The demand for graduate management education is once again on the rise. Presently applications are up across most of the MBA programs as reported by the Graduate Management Admission Council. This renewed surge in interest can be attributed, in part, to globalization, technology, and changing demographics. Developing a world-class MBA program in today’s dynamic educational and business environment calls for the increased use of learning support technologies (Li, 2007; Shih, 2003; Thomas, 2007). Blended learning systems (BLS), in particular, offer both a customized and an integrated learning experience through the use of traditional classroom learning experiences combined with the power of the Internet (Bonk, 2006). Blended learning environments, often characterized as hybrid learning, usually embrace many options for presenting content and interacting with students in both individual and collaborative contexts including a substantial e-learning aspect (Shroff, 2007).
In this regard, BLS are well-suited to meet the challenges associated with graduate management education since they provide instructional content at a time, location and pace convenient to the student (Jorgensen, 2002).

The complexities and interrelated nature of modern business practice call for an integrated learning approach to graduate management education (Fry, 2007). One learning strategy that recognizes the need for an integrated yet flexible learning experience is the Instructional Management System (IMS) cooperative initiative (Graves, 1999). This initiative is designed to promote systematic thinking regarding the delivery of higher education, to improve learning outcomes, and to increase return on instructional investments. Specific principles of the IMS initiative are: 1) Education involves more than a single course; 2) A course is more than content; 3) Content is more important than lecture notes; 4) Convenience is important; and 5) Quality assurance requires an integrated learning approach. The IMS initiative calls for the increased use of Internet resources to promote integrated learning and to improve outcomes. Blended learning systems are designed to support the IMS initiative.

A second initiative that supports blended learning is the E-Learning Success Model (Delone, 2003). This model design suggests that the overall effectiveness of blended learning depends on the attainment of success at each of three stages: system design, system delivery, and system outcomes. The efficacious use of this paradigm will require the integration of all three stages. Figure 1 presents an overview of the e-learning success model.

This paradigm consists of three distinct, but interconnected, phases: system design, system delivery and system outcomes. Each phase consists of a number of specific performance metrics. For example, service quality can be measured using availability, reliability and response time. Assessment rubrics can be used for evaluating each performance metric. The model’s architecture suggests that the overall effectiveness of e-learning depends on the attainment of success at each of three stages as well as in the aggregate.

The chapter is organized as follows 1) a review of the current slants and trends in worldwide MBA programs; 2) an overview of blended systems and technology; and 3) an assessment of empirical results associated with blended learning technologies.

**MBA PROGRAM TRENDS**

MBA programs come in a variety of shapes and sizes which are designed to take into account the diverse student backgrounds. Table 1 provides an overview of the basic characteristics associated with three of the most common types of the MBA programs: executive, professional, and residential. The primary difference between these programs is
Related Content

Case Studies of ICT-Enhanced Blended Learning and Implications for Professional Development
www.igi-global.com/chapter/case-studies-ict-enhanced-blended/9197?camid=4v1a

Reappraising Design Practice
www.igi-global.com/chapter/reappraising-design-practice/59800?camid=4v1a

Towards Work-Based Mobile Learning: What We Can Learn from the Fields of Work-Based Learning and Mobile Learning
www.igi-global.com/article/towards-work-based-mobile-learning/49675?camid=4v1a

Mobile Learning: Starting in the Right Place, Going in the Right Direction?
www.igi-global.com/chapter/mobile-learning-starting-right-place/69646?camid=4v1a