Effectively Combining Traditional Learning and e-Learning Pedagogies Across Disciplines: Ethical Considerations and Student Success Outcomes

Jonathan H. Westover
Woodbury School of Business
Director of Academic Service Learning
Utah Valley University

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Abstract

This presentation examines the role and effectiveness of hybrid, or blended learning course offerings within the higher education context. Providing a brief review of the growing body of academic literature on the effectiveness of the hybrid model, this presentation will also explore student-oriented ethical considerations and potential student success outcomes related to blended learning courses. Finally, this presentation will provide a brief look at two distinct hybrid courses; one lower-division college algebra course and one upper-division human resource management course. The strengths and weaknesses of these hybrid courses will be assessed and discussed alongside a brief proposal for continued academic research examining hybrid course best practices.
Introduction

With more and more pressure being put on institutions of higher education to provide both greater access to programs and reduce costs, more and more universities and colleges have been embracing the role of distance education progress and online courses.

While the quality of online courses have continued to improve over the past decade, and while many students do quite well within the online learning environment, opponents of online learning have long argued for the continued need for the face-to-face atmosphere and interactive environment that is important in the learning process for so many students.

Within the context of this pedagogical and technology tension, the hybrid course (partially online, partially face-to-face) has been born.
“… that most of the studies reviewed were descriptive and exploratory, that most online students are nontraditional and Anglo American, and that few universities have written policies, guidelines, or technical support for faculty members or students. Asynchronous communication seemed to facilitate in-depth communication (but not more than in traditional classes), students liked to move at their own pace, learning outcomes appeared to be the same as in traditional courses, and students with prior training in computers were more satisfied with online courses. Continued research is needed to inform learner outcomes, learner characteristics, course environment, and institutional factors related to delivery system variables in order to test learning theories and teaching models inherent in course design” (Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006, p. 93).
Hybrid Courses

- “classes in which instruction takes place in a traditional classroom setting augmented by computer-based or online activities which can replace classroom seat time” (Scida and Saury, 2006).
- “… a growing number of colleges are experimenting with ‘hybrid’ or ‘blended’ models of teaching that replace some in-person meetings with virtual sessions” (Young, 2002, p. A33).
- Scida and Saury [2] further argue that “hybrid courses are becoming more and more the norm in higher education in the United States as earlier predictions of the explosion of completely online courses have not been borne out in practice” (Scida and Saury, 2006).
- Hybrid classes are less controversial among university faculty than offering traditional fully virtual courses and “… hybrid courses may be a better way than fully online courses to help busy commuter students” (Young, 2002, p. A33).
Many proponents of hybrid courses say their main motivation is to improve the educational experience for students and to relieve limited resource pressures on college campuses, pointing to research that demonstrates that using blended learning improves student success rates in learning outcomes and retention (Boyle et al., 2003) and that hybrid courses alleviate campus classroom shortages and enrollment pressures (Young, 2002).

"A strong case is beginning to be made on the basis of research evidence that many students learn better online than face-to-face, and therefore a mixture is the best way. What proportion that mixture should be would vary from course to course.” - Chris Dede, professor of learning technologies at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education
10 Key Lessons on Offering Effective Hybrid Courses

- Lesson #1: There is no standard approach to a hybrid course.
- Lesson #2: Redesigning a traditional course into a hybrid takes time.
- Lesson #3: Start small and keep it simple.
- Lesson #4: Redesign is the key to effective hybrid courses to integrate the face-to-face and online learning.
- Lesson #5: Hybrid courses facilitate interaction among students, and between students and their instructor.
- Lesson #6: Students don't grasp the hybrid concept readily.
- Lesson #7: Time flexibility in hybrid courses is universally popular.
- Lesson #8: Technology was not a significant obstacle.
- Lesson #9: Developing a hybrid course is a collegial process.
- Lesson #10: Both the instructors and the students liked the hybrid course model.

(See Aycock et al., 2002)
Brief Cases

- Brief Case 1: A College Algebra Hybrid Course
  - Brief Course Overview
  - E-Learning Class Components
  - Face-to-Face Class Sessions
  - Technology Utilized

- Brief Case 2: An Introductory HR Hybrid Course
  - Brief Course Overview
  - E-Learning Class Components
  - Face-to-Face Class Sessions
  - Technology Utilized
First and foremost, this model was assignment intensive. Each student was required to watch the video lecture, complete practice problems, do a homework assignment, as well as a quiz for each section.

Secondly, we found that students were not always prepared for the in-class instruction with their questions or things that they wished to discuss in order to make the most of their in-class time with the instructor.

A strength of this approach was the multiple learning approaches that students were required to take when learning a new concept. This allowed for multiple pedagogical techniques to be used by each student in order for them to have a better understanding of each concept.
This model was also assignment intensive.

We found that the effectiveness and quality of each week's face-to-face sessions was largely dependent on each student's personal preparation, with some students obviously consistently taking the lead in the in-class discussions and activities while other students continue to be more passive.

A clear strength of this approach is the multiple learning approaches and the requirement for continual reflection, application, and deep learning of the material, rather than focusing on surface-level and more superficial aspects of the content.
Ethical Considerations

- Student Access
- Academic Honesty
- Learning Analytics and Student Privacy
- Faculty Intellectual Property
- Shifting Higher Ed Landscape
Student Success Outcomes

Face-to-Face < Online < Hybrid

- Student Pass Rates
- Student Retention Rates
- Student Content Knowledge
- Other Outcomes?
Proposed Future Research

- Explore the effective use of hybrid courses within the ever-changing landscape of higher education.
- Learning and various stakeholder outcomes of hybrid teaching, as compared directly to a variety of other teaching models (including traditional semester long face-to-face courses, condensed face-to-face courses, strictly online courses, etc.) across academic disciplines.
- Much of this research can and may take a comparative case-methodology approach, but where feasible, other rigorous quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods approaches should also be utilized.
Conclusions

- The landscape of higher education is continuing to change.
- With the continued increase in online and distance education course offerings, including the growing popularity of “MOOCs” (massive open online courses), institutions of higher education need to find more cost-effective and value added ways to provide reasonably priced, meaningful and substantial education for its students.
- The adoption of hybrid courses provides a unique opportunity to bridge the divide but much more research needs to be conducted to demonstrate the utility and sustainability of such an approach.
- A one-size-fits-all model will likely not be effective when it is applied to a diverse set of students, across a diverse set of disciplines.

Utah Valley University