Feedback on Using Virtual Classrooms for Teaching Blended ComputerScience and Information Technology Courses at TaifUniversity

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Article Summary

This article presents a study of using blended online teaching methods for CS and IT courses conducted at the College of Computers and Information Technology (CIT) in Taif University. According to Barnett et al. "Professional use of technology in a lesson certainly pushes the students to become more involved in learning the new concepts, organizing the course themes, and digesting the key ideas." Technology certainly forces educators to change the way they teach. Meyers & Jones (1993) discussed the strategies of promoting active learning in higher education classrooms. Different teaching strategies such as problem solving exercises, cooperative student projects, informal group work, simulations, case studies, and role playing are compiled with a wide range of technology tools and media resources.

The second section of the article shows studies and concepts related to blended learning and virtual classrooms. Blended learning is broadly defined as "replacing seat time in courses with online activities to achieve learning objectives" (VanDerLinden, 2014). The article explains how blended learning is used as a formal education where students learn using traditional face-to-face classes combined with online classes or at least computer driven activities. There is a good figure that shows a Venn Diagram of blended learning, showing that it takes the best aspects from human-based learning and technology-based learning.

The third section of the article discusses the course preparation and setup which involve the sample courses, the plan of the blended courses used in this study, the introductory remarks given to students about virtual classrooms, and the construction of test/trial sessions to get

students familiar with virtual classroom environments. Two sample courses were planned to use the virtual classrooms (Web Systems & Computing Ethics). The plan was designated to give each section 42 hours of theory classes. The plan of the blended courses was stated in the syllabus and given verbally during the first lecture.

The fourth section investigates the students' feedback and reflection using the virtual classrooms using qualitative and quantitative methods. Students were given a poll after the last online lecture. The table stated that 61% of students strongly agree that they can understand the main content being discussed during the virtual classroom.

Finally, section five gives the conclusion of the article and remarks towards future directions. The article stated that deciding which type of activities to be conducted online is critical to achieve full advantages of instructional technology tools. I think the fourth section of the article proves the most important point: A majority of students can understand the main content being discussed through distance education. 61% of students in this research strongly agreed and 19% agreed that they understood the content even though they were not face-to-face with the instructor.

Article Reflection/Application

One of the big things that makes this article relevant to me is that students can still grasp all the material even if they are not being taught the material directly to them in person. In the school I teach in, I see hundreds of kids everyday. One of the most difficult parts of teaching for me is students being absent and trying to get them caught up. If I can present my material in an online format that is presentable to all students, I can post my lessons/content online and then I

don't have to worry about tracking students down to get them caught up with what they missed. It may be a little more work up front but could pay off substantially in the long run. I have spoken with the math teacher at our school and she has taken this route and said it has worked tremendously for her.

I will use all this information to continue to present my students with a wide variety of technology tools and media resources. I think some teachers may become complacent when they find a strategy or style that works for them and then they never try new things to see if something might work better. It's important to continue and learn and grow and present your students with the most up to date technology in this technology driven world.

I can relate to this article because like in this article I try to give my students polls and questionnaires for various reasons. Sometimes, I will post an anonymous poll to see how they felt or if they grasped today's concepts. Other times, I post questionnaires for my students to see what I could do better or how I could have improved. Most kids will be honest with you, and let you know if they think you could be doing something different. It's important to continue to grow and try to get better everyday.