Matthew Brue
Article Summary #2

Blended Learning: An Institutional Approach for Enhancing Students' Learning Experiences

The purpose of this article from the MERLOT Journal of Online Learning & Teaching was to examine the benefits that blended learning provides to students learning experiences via an institutional approach. It focuses on the case of a single institution in the United Kingdom. Williams, Bland, and Christie (2008) define blended learning as a combination of traditional face-to-face learning and distributed learning, the latter which "is an instructional model that allows lecturers,students, and content to be in different locations" (p.43). Driscoll (2002) identifies four different concept of blended learning, which Oliver and Trigwell (2005) summarize as follows (p. 18):

- Combining or mixing web-based technology to accomplish an educational goal.
- Combining pedagogical approaches to produce optimal learning outcomes with or without instructional technology.
- Combining any form of instructional technology with face-to-face instructor-led training.
- Combining instructional technology with actual job tasks.

However, Sioman (2007) argues that blended learning shouldn't simply be considered in terms of delivery and technology. Therefore, blended learning is itself a blend. It is a mix of pedagogical approaches that combines the effectiveness and opportunities in the classroom with technological enhancements of online learning (Dziuban, Hartman, Juge, Moskal, & Sorg, 2006).

Another note I took away from the article is that blended learning can bring out a good practice principle, which is to give prompt feedback. Blended learning usually involves online interaction, which can facilitate feedback. Through my years in taking & teaching classes, feedback is one of the most important areas to help students learn

and grow. Feedback can improve a student's confidence, self-awareness and

enthusiasm for learning.

The article then shifts to the various challenges of blended learning. It says that

the use of blended learning can pose challenges for students and universities.

Unrealistic expectations and feelings of isolation are challenges for students, along with

challenges presented by technology. I found a very detailed table to be quite helpful

when summarizing the benefits and challenges of blended learning.

The last sections of the article went on to state the results and then come to conclusions

and suggestions for future research. My conclusion from the article is that blended

learning cannot totally replace face-to-face contact with students. Although technology

is important, the most important element for successful development of blended

learning is an understanding of the learners' methods and the types of support they

require. It is crucial to take steps to respect and recognize students' diverse talents and

ways of learning. If you do plan on using blended learning, it would be suggested that

the teaching style is kept simple and realistic to best suit the course, the content, and

the students needs.

Article Reflection/Application

I found this article to be relevant to me as I find myself using the flipped

classroom as an instructional strategy, which is a type of blended learning model in

which students view lecture material prior to class, then spend class time engaging in

exercises under the supervision of the teacher. As I write this right now, I just finished

making online lesson plans for a two week period where our school will be closed due to

the coronavirus outbreak. According to the article's studies , "blended learning" reduces

failure rates, improves learning, and boosts engagement. Blended learning combines

the best aspects of face-to-face teaching and online instruction in ways that enable

students to learn at their own pace. I will use this information by making sure I still use a

variety of media/technology sources and still utilize face-to-face contact as well. One

thing the article said was that blended learning cannot totally replace face-to-face

contact with students. As with any approach there are always going to be pros and cons

and its important to have a healthy blend to help appeal to all learners. You can't be a

single style teacher and expect all your students to flourish. Every student has different

capabilities and ways to learn so it's important to try to reach all of them.