Chapter 12

Blending In:
Moving Beyond Categories in Digitally–Mediated Learning

Marvin D. LeNoue
North Dakota State University, USA

Ronald Stammen
North Dakota State University, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter comprises an outline of the prototype concept referred to as Second-Wave Enabled Technology Enhanced (SWETE) instruction. SWETE is positioned to subsume the blended learning concept, critiqued as a categorization that will fade to ubiquity as second-generation e-learning paradigms predominate in digitally-mediated education and training. In this chapter, the operational attributes of the SWETE model are presented via description of second-wave technologies, delineation of recent changes in educational cultures and contexts, and discussion of the principles of effective digitally-mediated education. The authors highlight the benefits of social media-driven instructional designs and introduce the use of Blackboard LMS/social network site mashups as core tools for online teaching and learning. The chapter ends with a look at the future of mobile and blended learning, and a call for research into the use of social network technology in the delivery of learning opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

Work on the design and delivery of digitally-mediated (DM) instruction for the Educational Leadership graduate programs offered by the North Dakota State University School of Educa-tion has led to the development of an approach that we refer to as Second Wave Enabled Technology Enhanced instruction (SWETE). The SWETE model is founded upon the combination of Web 2.0 technologies applied as e-learning tools and a reconceived blended learning paradigm. SWETE utilizes many of the intuitive, interactive applications associated with the social media revolution.

The model also includes approaches to instructional design and delivery that embody what Bonk (2009) describes as blurred distinctions between classifications such as fully online or supplemental, face-to-face or distance, synchronous or asynchronous.

Our objectives in developing the SWETE model include (a) movement beyond previous e-learning and blended-learning categories, (b) accomplishment of seamless interplay among delivery styles and tool sets, and (c) development of instructional designs oriented toward adaptation to the demands of a variety of contexts, contents, and learning objectives. A primary feature of SWETE is the employment of flexible combinations of delivery modes in the service of (a) maximizing efficiency and effectiveness at the institutional and program level, and (b) facilitating optimal course-level learning outcomes by supporting higher levels of engagement, social contact, interaction, relevance, and context in online education delivery. This is achieved by the use of Blackboard LMS/Ning social network site mashups as the core of our online delivery platform (LeNoue & Stammen, 2009). This combination affords the creation of virtual classrooms that are low-demand in terms of necessary hardware, tech support, bandwidth, and user technical proficiency. These spaces support necessary administrative functions while providing easy access to flexible, modular suites of simple-to-use content delivery and communication tools. Many of these are Web 2.0-style social media tools that allow the projection of enhanced personal presence in digitally-mediated environments, enable range and intensity in individual expression, afford multimodal interaction, and empower collaboration and co-creation on the part of course participants.

In this chapter, we will construct a rationale for adoption of the SWETE model, and offer an experiential viewpoint on this new approach to DM education. Our chapter objectives include the following:

- discussion of blended learning as a graded cognitive model
- delineation of the second-wave e-learning paradigm
- explication of the SWETE model
- description of an instructional approach that makes use of a thick tool set and a fluid delivery style
- prediction of future directions in mobile blended learning
- suggestion of future research directions

We present an overall vision of the way a broad, versatile, and readily-available set of interactive technology tools can be deployed to provide multi-modal content support, dense participant interaction, and optimized learning outcomes. SWETE is an instructional design methodology that is adaptable to tight budgetary constraints, suitable for contexts that call for rapid updating and flexible configuration, and amenable to the efficient use of open educational resources.

BACKGROUND

Beyond Blended Learning

Blended learning (BL) is a term that has entered widespread use as a description of a particular form of teaching with technology. BL has risen in profile over the past three decades, yet remains difficult to define clearly (Oliver & Trigwell, 2005). A practical descriptor that has gained some currency proposes BL to include learning environments in which face-to-face (F2F) instruction is combined with digitally-mediated instruction (Graham, 2006; Graham, Allen, & Ure, 2005; Oliver & Trigwell, 2005). As part of efforts to enrich students' learning experience, maximize efficiencies in time and facilities use, and enhance program marketability, many higher education institutions are expanding their blended course offerings (Mossavar-Rahmani & Larson-Daugherty,

Related Content

K-12 Online Student Engagement: New Construct or Extension to Existing Construct?
Elizabeth A. Anderson (2019). *Handbook of Research on Emerging Practices and Methods for K-12 Online and Blended Learning (pp. 155-170).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/k-12-online-student-engagement/223611

A Kaleidoscope of Variables: The Complex Nature of Online Education in Composition Courses
Christopher Friend, Sean Michael Morrisand Jesse Stommel (2017). *Blended Learning: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 346-364).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-kaleidoscope-of-variables/163531

Blended Learning to Support Alternative Teacher Certification
Anika Ball Anthony, Belinda G. Gimbertand Rebecca A. Parker (2014). *Practical Applications and Experiences in K-20 Blended Learning Environments (pp. 225-237).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/blended-learning-to-support-alternative-teacher-certification/92977

Crossing into the Dreamtime: Evaluating the Benefits of Weblogs as a Blended Learning Tool for University Students to Teach Elementary School Students about Australian Culture
Courtney Bauderand John K. Thompson (2013). *Transcultural Blended Learning and Teaching in Postsecondary Education (pp. 216-236).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/crossing-into-dreamtime/68626

Mobile Learning as a Tool for Indigenous Language Revitalization and Sustainability in Canada: Framing the Challenge
Marguerite Kooleand Kevin wâsakâyâsiw Lewis (2018). *International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning (pp. 1-12).*
www.irma-international.org/article/mobile-learning-as-a-tool-for-indigenous-language-revitalization-and-sustainability-in-canada/210083