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Student Perceptions of a Hybrid Textile Science Course

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Student Perceptions of a Hybrid Textile Science Course

Abstract
Online, hybrid/blended and other distance education courses are used by colleges and universities as an instructional tool to meet budget and population growth needs. Advantages of hybrid courses include self-paced learning, ability to review course content, convenience, and exploration of topics through additional weblinks.

Keywords
textile science, hybrid, teaching, students

Disciplines
Fashion Business | Higher Education | Online and Distance Education

Comments
Student perceptions of a hybrid textile science course

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With budget constraints and an increasingly diverse and growing student population, universities need to expand in new and exciting ways to encourage learning (Rampell, 2010; Li & Irby, 2008). Online, hybrid/blended and other distance education courses are used by colleges and universities as an instructional tool to meet budget and population growth needs. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2006-2007, two-thirds (66 percent) of 2-year and 4-year degree-granting postsecondary institutions reported offering online or hybrid/blended online education courses for any level or audience (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Hybrid courses combine traditional face-to-face lectures and teacher interactions with online materials such as quizzes, website resources, and discussion postings. Advantages of hybrid courses include self-paced learning, ability to review course content, convenience, and exploration of topics through additional weblinks (Crutsinger, Knight, & Kinley, 2005). Online content can be accessed using learning management systems such as WebCT, Blackboard, and Noodle, or newer Web 2.0 social networking venues such as Facebook and Ning (Young, 2002).

The purpose of this study was to examine students’ overall satisfaction and perceptions of a hybrid course. With this study we were concerned with students’ perceptions of the format of the hybrid course opposed to learning or retention of the information. An introductory textile course was selected for this study. The course is a required 4-credit course for undergraduate students enrolled in the apparel, merchandising, and design program at a land-grant Midwestern University. The course requires students to memorize factual information and then apply their knowledge in a hands-on laboratory environment. The course consists of twice-a-week 75 minute laboratory meetings. Online assignments include lecture content with corresponding weekly quizzes, paragraph response lab assignments, and mandatory discussion boards in which students need to summarize and post discussions about assigned readings.

The questionnaire used for this study assessed participants' attitudes towards the course and the required course components and were based on items previously used by Johnson, Burnett, and Rolling (2002) and Wang and Newlin (2000). The items were presented in WebCT over a one week period at the end of the semester and included a Likert-type scale format in which participants indicated their level of agreement (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) with specific written statements. A limited amount of demographic information (e.g., year in school, GPA) was assessed to allow students to maintain anonymity. Three extra credit points were added to each participating students’ final grade.

Nine semesters of the introduction to textile science course were collected from spring 2007 to fall 2010 for a total number of 457 usable student responses. Student classification included freshman (n=112, 25%), sophomore (n=230, 50%), juniors (n=95, 21%), and senior
students (n=20, 4%). The majority of the students anticipated grades of A (n=149, 32%), B (n=222, 48%), or C (n=78, 17%). Nearly all of the students used WebCT in at least two other courses (n=411, 90%) and stated they enjoyed using computers (M=4.15). Most of the students stated satisfaction with the course (M=3.85). Descriptive statistics determined students’ favorite component of the hybrid course. Thirty-two percent of responding students stated they enjoyed all aspects of the course (n=145). Twenty-seven percent stated they enjoyed the on-line readings and discussions the most (n=125). Twenty-one percent stated they enjoyed the online lecture content (n=94). Thirteen percent enjoyed the online quizzes (n=60) and seven percent enjoyed the in-class lab manual (n=33). Space at the conclusion of the survey was provided for comments. Representative statements included the following:

- “The online course provided more background information than was given in the [face-to-face] course, the online lectures were more comprehensible, the class was good for analyzing the textiles though; that would be hard to do online.” Student #3
- “I liked having the online part for being able to do some of the work on my own time and having the responsibility of remembering to take the quizzes and the readings etc online but I am also a visual learner so I learned most from [the teacher] and her examples in the classroom.” Student #14
- “I think using WebCT for this class is really helpful. Attending class is good, but being able to reinforce the concepts on WebCT helped me to learn the material better. Also, having online quizzes helped me to be accountable to study the material each week so I didn't get behind.” Student #356

The results of this study suggest that students appreciated the hybrid format for the strengths inherent in meeting face-to-face (in person explanations) and online (convenience).

References


