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Use of an LMS in Undergraduate Business Communications Courses

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Use of a Learning Management System in Undergraduate Business Communications Courses

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Abstract
Does the current college population embrace the use of technology for classwork? They may be devoted users of text messaging, Facebook and even Google, but do they take advantage of the learning tools created for their specific coursework? Beyond the cost for the university to have licensing for the software, there is considerable effort of faculty and technology staff to create, upload, troubleshoot and maintain these educational support areas. Does it advance the students' knowledge? Is it a useful tool to understand course objectives? A small case study of students in a northeast liberal arts university, business majors or minors who used a learning management system, (LMS) in their Business Communications course was conducted. Analysis of this study and other recent research in this rapidly growing pedagogical method will be reported.

Keywords
Learning Management Systems (LMS), Hybrid, Blackboard, Online, <mark>Performance</mark> 2000 word max

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1. Background

The use of LMS in higher education has expanded to support online teaching which, for some institutions, includes distance learning. Faculty usage in colleges that offer bachelor's degrees has increased from 25% in 2005 to almost 40% in 2009 (Arroway, Davenport, Guangning, & Updegrove 2010). Faculty are encouraged to enhance their courses with LMS. Attracting/retaining students with technology, having multiple methods of interaction, an area for notes for students' review and for addressing any universal design needs for various types of learners are driving goals of utilizing LMS. It also allows possible online/distant education methods. LMS could also be used simply for syllabus and study guides, or discussions, self-assessment tests, quizzes, grade posting and group communications (Clark 2002). The students in this study were able to access PowerPoint chapter slides, instructional articles and sites, the class syllabus, required discussions and wiki group work.

1.1 Recent Studies

Student satisfaction with an LMS has been correlated with course content (Malikowski 2008; Naveh, Tubin, & Pilskin 2010; Sun, Tsai, Finger, Chen, & Yeh 2008) and with course discipline (Naveh, Tubin, & Pilskin 2010). Bikrimirov and Klassen (2008) found that student performance in an introductory hybrid finance course was significantly related to access to homework solutions on WebCT. A diverse international study of accounting students reported high levels of satisfaction associated with five variables: lecture notes availability, online assessment, announcements, model answers, and online chat (Basioudis, De Lange, Suwardy, & Wells 2007). The results of 111 business students in southeastern United States, although neutral in general satisfaction with hybrid learning of 60% class time and 40% online, depicted high levels of satisfaction with prompt feedback, active learning and faculty contact (Young & Duhaney 2008).

1.2 This Study

The hybrid business communication course in this study was 80% in class and 20% usage of the online lms. The book was accessible for free online through the publisher, Flatworldknowledge but was purchased by some students. The access to the online book was separate from the Blackboard LMS.
Students were asked how many times they logged in to the LMS other than for discussion or the wiki. The faculty dashboard of recent student activity was also assessed for general usage. Preliminary results suggest that regular users are the higher performing students. Other questions investigate the usefulness of posted material including, slides, format outlines, discussion articles, links to research sites and other instructional material for the course project and the wiki group work area.

2. METHOLOGY

Students in two Business Communications courses were surveyed online by items created on SurveyMonkey. A section of the survey included the validated student engagement instrument (Handlesman, Briggs, Sullivan & Towler 2005)

This hybrid course required students to meet face-to-face and use the Internet accessible Blackboard LMS course companion.

3. RESULTS

Use of wiki was the most questionable. Evenly split that mandatory usage was valuable with 50% strongly/agree and 50% disagree/strongly disagree. Yet, students understood that it was important to use a wiki for group work as the majority, 57.1%, disagreed/strongly disagreed that it should not be used for group work.

One respondent noted google docs as a group tool and five others stated that Facebook group message was their main method of collaboration.

Predictors   indicators

4. FUTURE STUDIES AND CONCLUSION

Group tools are important for business communications.

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