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EXPLORING THE APPLICATION OF BLENDED LEARNING SYSTEMS IN A SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Abstract:

More and more we hear the expression "blended learning" being used in higher educational institutions. In support the American Society for Training and Development (cited by Rooney, 2003) also identified blended learning as one of the top ten trends to emerge in the knowledge delivery industry. Moreover, the nonexistence of technological availability prohibited the blending of traditional face-to-face learning with distance and or open learning environments. However, within the last decade the introduction of new technological innovations coined Learner Management Systems (LMS) tried to fill the gap between traditional face-to-face learning and distance and open learning environments. Hence, the question arises on what is this "blended learning" that the whole world is talking about?

The main purpose of this study is to review and analyze the literature on blended learning through reflecting on the past, the present and the future. More specifically this research aim to provide a comprehensive view of blended learning systems and discuss its possible application within the higher educational environment.

This article will attempt to provide a basic introduction to blended learning systems and share some trends and issues that might be greatly relevant to the higher educational institution under enquiry who is implementing such systems. To accomplish these goals, the article will also attempt to address the following questions related to blended learning systems such as: How is blended defined? Why higher educational institutions need a blended approach? What current blended learning models exist? What issues and challenges are faced when blending is introduced within a higher educational setting? and What are the future directions of blended learning systems within higher educational institutions?