STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HYBRID EDUCATION

A Thesis

Presented to the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
California State University, Sacramento

Submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Education
(Higher Education Leadership)

by

Gabriel Hernandez

SPRING
2012
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Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Abstract

of

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HYBRID EDUCATION

by

Gabriel Hernandez

Brief Literature Review

The hybrid-learning model, otherwise considered blended learning, is growing quickly, and estimates for the future indicate that between 80 to 90 percent of courses will someday be hybrid (Young, 2002). Access, communication, and the ability to meet the needs of non-traditional students are strong components of hybrid learning. However, interaction, curriculum, instruction and leadership are challenges to hybrid learning. As the hybrid model advances, its effectiveness should be continuously examined.

Statement of the Problem

The popularity of online and hybrid courses is rising, and traditional methods to classroom teaching are no longer the only learning solution for students. Although minimal research has been conducted to reflect the success or failure of hybrid courses, there is still a need to further investigate student perspectives on the effectiveness of hybrid courses within all areas of concentration in higher education. Skepticism and disapproval has lingered for online courses, and many educators and employers believe
online courses lack credibility (Jackson and Helms, 2008). However, insufficient research on hybrid education has been collected to uphold the same notions.

Methodology

The methodology for this research reflects a mixed-method approach. Data was collected through an electronic questionnaire using closed-ended and open-ended questions. The survey was administered online through a website survey tool. All students were accessed by electronic mail. The sample population consisted of 81 students enrolled in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies graduate programs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Findings from this research include student perspectives on learning limitations in hybrid courses, student needs in hybrid courses, student expectations of hybrid courses, and impact of reduced face time on the student learning experience. The research will show that student perspectives on the effectiveness of hybrid education are positive and that the overall learning experience in a hybrid course is effective. However, additional research is needed regarding student perspectives on hybrid education. Any additional research attempts should consider and include various educational concentrations, different institutions, and faculty perceptions. Also, longitudinal approaches should be considered in future studies on the effectiveness of hybrid education.

José Chávez, Ed.D.

Date
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Support and motivation were fundamental to achieving success, and I wish to extend my appreciation and gratitude to everyone who played an important part in this accomplishment.

To my fiancé, Kerry: thank you for your support, love, and encouragement. Your unconditional motivation was a pillar to my success.

To my thesis writing partners and friends, Becca and Reina: thank you for your commitment, collaboration and accountability. I could not have done it without our continuous writing, venting, and snacking sessions.

To my family: thank for always believing in me and supporting my pursuits in higher education. Without your love and support, I would not be where I am.
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

The increasing familiarity and use of online courses has become a large part of modern learning, primarily in higher education and continuing education. Much research has been done on the effectiveness of online courses and its comparison to traditional face-to-face courses. The evolution of hybrid courses has slowly emerged to the forefront of integrating technology into higher education without fully converting curriculum into an online model. Hybrid courses are more favorable in that they provide a solution to the challenges of traditional face-to-face classroom learning and online learning. However, student perspectives on the effectiveness of hybrid education at institutions of higher learning remain to be uncertain. As this method of learning evolves, its progress and effectiveness must be followed, observed, and further examined.

Statement of the Problem

As technology becomes a larger part of everyday life, it has started to impact the evolution of higher education and the process by which teaching and learning occurs. The popularity of online and hybrid courses is rising, and the traditional methods of classroom teaching are no longer the only type of learning environment for students. Although minimal research has been conducted to reflect the success or failure of hybrid
courses, there is still a need to further investigate student perspectives on the effectiveness of hybrid courses within all areas of concentration in higher education. Specifically, research is needed in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies.

Skepticism and disapproval has lingered for online courses, and many educators and employers believe online courses lack credibility (Jackson & Helms, 2008). However, insufficient research on hybrid education has been collected to uphold the same notions. Thus, this study will examine student perspectives on the effectiveness of hybrid courses in graduate education. Specific questions to be addressed are:

1. What are the learning limitations for students within a hybrid course?
2. How does a hybrid course meet the needs of the student?
3. What are the expectations of students within a hybrid course?
4. How does less face-to-face time affect the learning experience for students?

Definition of Terms

The examination and discussion of hybrid education will require certain terminology to be introduced and used when referring to different models of learning within this study. Identifying and distinguishing these terms is pertinent and important for the relevance of this study. It is also important to understand the comparability and difference between all of the following terms.

A traditional course, or the traditional method of learning, provides that instruction only occur face-to-face in the classroom. Traditional courses allow for
interaction between students and instructors in person. These types of courses meet regularly at the institution granting the degree of study.

An *online course*, or the online method of learning, provides that all regularly scheduled classroom time is replaced by required activities completed at distance and managed online. Online courses remove any face-to-face interaction, but still allow for synchronous and asynchronous communication between students and instructor. These communications include electronic mail, posting of notices, streaming video, discussion boards, and chat rooms (Baglione & Nastanski, 2007). In addition, online courses allow for self-paced learning and flexibility.

A *hybrid course*, or the hybrid model of learning, provides a combination of face-to-face instruction with online learning. Hybrid courses are commonly referred to as blended learning. In a hybrid course, part of the learning occurs online. As a result, the amount of classroom seat-time is reduced. Hybrid courses allow for some flexibility, but they maintain constant face-to-face interaction with students and instructors. However, hybrid courses vary appreciably in the amount of seat time that is eliminated and the ratio of face-to-face time to online time (Brunner, 2006).

A *web-enhanced course* is a traditional face-to-face course that incorporates technology into its learning. Web-enhanced courses are usually augmented with websites and learning management systems. However, these courses offer all of the instruction in face-to-face meetings.
**Blended learning** refers to the integration of face-to-face learning and online learning. Blended learning is often a convergence of traditional and online courses. This practice combines teaching methods from both face-to-face and online learning (Eduviews, 2009).

**Distance Education** is the term most commonly used and renowned descriptor for distance learning (Moore, Dickson-Deane, & Galyen, 2011). It mainly refers to learning or courses offered from a distance. Most of today’s distance education is referred to as online distance education and may include offering courses by the Internet, video, and any other forms outside of the classroom. It is referred to in federal law and regulation as education that uses one or more to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor (20 U.S.C. § 1003(7) and 34 C.F.R. § 600.2. as cited in Scott & US Government Accountability, 2011).

**Limitations**

As a subset of technological advancement in the world of education, hybrid courses face many limitations and have many challenges. Although hybrid education is commonly seen as a solution by its ability to blend the face-to-face experience with the online learning experience, limitations and challenges still exist for students and instructors. Because hybrid education blends the methods of online courses and
traditional courses, it also absorbs some of the challenges and limitations of both methods.

One of the common limitations noted by skeptics of online education is the lack of personal interaction and communication. Although hybrid education minimizes this limitation with its combination of face-to-face time with online learning, it persists to remain a challenge for this type of learning. The evolution of technology has inevitably constructed a population of students conditioned to communicate electronically with peers (Baglione & Nastanski, 2007). Thus, learning personal communication skills is debunked within online and hybrid models of learning. Hybrid education may provide a platform for all students to engage and interact electronically, but it also allows students to rely on online tools for this opportunity. Moreover, online education, in general, allows for a growth in social disconnect between students as it replaces social interaction with electronic interaction.

Hybrid courses require that students encompass the ability to function independently in the learning process (Brunner, 2006). Thus, hybrid courses do not provide a solution for all student populations. It is important for students enrolling in hybrid-structured classes to understand their motivation and learning strategies because it might impact their achievement (Clayton, Blumber, & Auld, 2010). Online coursework for hybrid classes contain material that must be learned independently and timely. Moreover, a student’s preferred learning style will have an impact on their success in online or hybrid courses.
Expectations from instructors and students change within the context of hybrid courses. The availability and access to greater resources, like greater use of the Internet and technology, allow faculty to increase their expectations. In addition, because independent learning occurs more frequently with students in hybrid courses, the faculty introduces more challenging teaching into their courses. This sometimes results in a greater workload than traditional face-to-face courses (Brunner, 2006).

Conversely, students may also change and increase the expectations of faculty in hybrid courses. The need for immediacy in adult learning (Simmons, 2007) factored with the common use of technology in everyday life, requires faculty to be readily available and more responsive. However, the success of hybrid education is partially relying on the interaction and involvement of faculty through technology. Jackson and Helms (2008) indicate that along with technology issues, faculty interaction is a common concern and limitation for students in hybrid courses. As discussed by Brunner (2006), “Technology does not make a good teacher; rather good teaching makes effective use of any tool, including technology, in support of overall pedagogy and course design” (p. 230). Furthermore, students still need instructor interaction in hybrid courses, but they recognize that there is a barrier when face-to-face interaction with instructors is limited. Results from Jackson and Helms (2008) analysis indicate that students see the instructor as having supplemental knowledge and material that will enhance the learning experience, and reduced personal interaction leads to miscommunication and misinterpretation of material.
Limitations to hybrid courses also include their reliability on technology and Internet access for successful implementation. Technology is prone to viruses, malware and impromptu crashes of equipment, user error, which all represent greater risks for students enrolled in hybrid courses, especially when they require frequent online interaction and assignments. In addition, students without access to the Internet at home are challenged with finding alternate locations for access, including traveling to the college campus (Jackson & Helms, 2008).

Importance of the Study

As the revolution of information technology continues to move forward, there are growing populations of non-traditional students that are enrolling at institutions of higher education (York, 2008). Thus, innovative learning strategies are beginning to arise as a necessity for this emerging type of student and for the volume of students entering higher education. Presented as a solution to the future of education, hybrid courses have gained popularity for their flexibility and range of learning styles. However, their existence at modern day universities remains relatively new. As more and more colleges and universities adopt this method of learning, it becomes more important to examine and understand whether hybrid courses are effective models for student learning.

Online courses demonstrated a peak in interest and popularity when first introduced, and hybrid courses are following with similar spikes but with more favorable opinions. As a medium between traditional courses and online courses, hybrid education
allows for the future of higher education to transition more steadily towards using
different methods to educate students. This change will not only mold the future of
education methodology, but it will also affect the field of administration in higher
education.

With the advancement of technology, hybrid education has many benefits for the
emerging population of students seeking technologically enhanced learning. More
importantly, it provides opportunities for students with preferred learning styles that do
not include traditional face-to-face instruction. Rising needs of students seeking
technological components to education will bring a diversity of institutional and
administrative challenges regarding the implementation of such methods. The hybrid
education model, along with progression of fusing technology with education, may begin
to mold the future of how higher education institutions incorporate, administer, and
support student needs. In addition, educational leaders will begin to encounter different
challenges in student academia, university policy, and institutional expenses.
Chapter 2
REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The evolution of technology has impacted the ways in which people communicate, socialize, conduct business, and learn. Although higher education has been slow to accept the integration of learning and technology, the merging of the two at institutions of higher education has become inevitable. Whether it is through incorporating technological components, offering online courses, or blending the two through hybrid courses, technology has become a part of the learning experience at colleges and universities around the country. The hybrid-learning model, otherwise considered blended learning, is growing quickly, and estimates for the future indicate that between 80 to 90% of courses will someday be hybrid (Young, 2002).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), distance education has increased 12% since 1999-2000. In 2006-2007, 20% of students had taken at least one class through extended learning, an increase from 8% in 1999-2000 (Parsad & Lewis, 2008). In addition, 35% of two-year and four-year institutions offered hybrid courses during the 2006-2007 academic year (Parsad & Lewis, 2008). Furthermore, perceptions of the effectiveness of hybrid courses in higher education will be reviewed and discussed in further detail.
In relation to hybrid course effectiveness, the subtopics that follow have emerged in the related literature and will be discussed in further detail. First, the literature review will discuss the differences between traditional, online, and hybrid learning. The distinction between these types of educational implementation methods is important for understanding the challenges and benefits of hybrid learning. Second, a review of the strengths of hybrid education will be addressed. This will expand on the characteristics of hybrid learning and the positive attributes to this style. Lastly, the challenges facing web-based hybrid learning will be discussed as it applies to higher education students. This section will bring light to the challenges in technology, learning style, and non-subject matter components.

Pedagogical Differences

The dynamics of face-to-face education has shifted with the emergence of hybrid courses. However, in determining the effectiveness of hybrid courses in higher education, the needs and expectations of institutions of higher learning must also be explored further. Traditional models of teaching and learning are changing as the evolving trend of hybrid and online education has become a part of the technological revolution. Instructors and students have adapted to new technological advances affecting higher education by integrating computers, email, and other web-enhanced technologies. However, they have not done so as effectively with modifying methodologies of instruction to fit courses that are hybrid or online. Changes in
technology also require changes in instruction and delivery of curriculum. With the integration of online and hybrid platforms of education into colleges and universities, the needs and expectations of both student and instructor are beginning to change. More specifically, the loss of more face-to-face time has affected the standards of teachers and learners for one another. Moreover, the struggle to delineate traditional, online, and hybrid courses continues.

*Traditional Learning*

Traditional learning allows for interaction between students and instructors in person and usually occurs in a classroom-based environment. These types of courses meet regularly and require face-to-face interaction. Traditional learning is often also referred to as face-to-face learning, on-ground learning, classroom-based learning, or brick-and-mortar learning. Traditional learning environments do not require any technological communication components between student and teacher (Berge & Collins, 1995; Hiltz, 1994; Kuehn, 1994; Tallent-Runnels et al. as cited by Clayton, Blumberg, & Auld, 2010). However, traditional learning is most often identified as face-to-face interaction between student and instructor on the campus of the degree-granting institution (York, 2008). In other words, traditional refers to classes or lectures on a university campus where students learn in the physical presence of an instructor.

As a method that is most commonly recognizable in the teaching and learning of K-12 and higher education, it has become the expected norm for the classroom. This kind of learning occurs in a closed environment and is structured by time, frequently
taught from bound textbooks (Desai, Hart, & Richards, 2008). This traditional approach to teaching and learning creates an environment that is susceptible to integrating skills of socialization. In addition, this kind of learning provides synchronous communication and is usually linear and sequential in pattern (Desai et al., 2008). Many attributes to traditional learning include in-person communication, speech and public speaking, presentation skills, and social interaction.

Although traditional learning occurs in real-time and face-to-face in a classroom setting, it does not hinder the ability for these courses to use technology. Traditional courses may choose to integrate software and technology to facilitate and augment the learning experience for students. These courses are commonly referred to as web-enhanced. Using web portals, learning management systems, and various technological tools, traditional courses infuse learning with multimedia components.

In addition to using technology for the enhancements that it provides to learning, technological tools must also be used to accommodate the needs of the new learner. Contemporary students approach knowledge differently, including how it is acquired, problem solving, and transitioning to the workforce (AASCU as cited in Dziuban, Moskal, & Hartman, 2005). Thus, institutions of higher education must ensure that education is meeting the needs of the present generation learner. Today’s students are more diverse than they had ever been in the past. Many enter college with stealth of knowledge and a high level of proficiency in technology, software, and the Internet (Dziuban et al., 2005).
Distance Education

Distance education refers to learning or course offerings that are offered from a distance. Although distance education is not a new concept, it has taken many new forms. In its origin, distance education was recognized as correspondence courses or home study courses completed by mail (Scott & US Government Accountability, 2011). However, it has evolved through four stages: (a) printed instruction, (b) early technology in broadcasting systems, (c) online instruction, and (d) web-based teleconferencing (Morabito, Sack, & Bhat as cited in Lim, Morris, & Kupritz, 2007). The advancements made in technology have helped the evolution of distance education.

Most of today’s distance education is referred to as online distance education and may include offering courses by the Internet, video, and any other forms outside of the classroom. It is referred to in federal law and regulation as education that uses one or more to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor (20 U.S.C. § 1003(7) and 34 C.F.R. § 600.2. as cited in Scott & US Government Accountability, 2011). It can be offered to students living on campus, off campus, or across the country (Scott & US Government Accountability, 2011).

According to Desai et al. (2008), distance education has the potential to facilitate strong interaction within the learning experience. However, in order to do so, interaction must occur between learners using high technological devices. In regards to distance
learners, four types of interactions can occur: (a) learner-content, (b) learner-instructor, (c) learner-learner, and (d) learner-technology (Desai et al., 2008).

**Online Learning**

Advances in technology have impacted higher education to the extent that pedagogy and learning have changed. Online instruction may be any form of learning and/or teaching that takes place through a computer network (Lim et al., 2007). Online learning is a form of distance education, but learning only occurs through the use of computers and the Internet. Computers, Internet, and Learning Management Systems have expanded the classroom by allowing learning to take place globally. Angelo (2007) stated that American households with high-speed Internet have increased by 24% since 2004, from 31% to 55%. According to the United States Department of Education (2009), “today’s online learning offers rich education resources in multiple media and the capability to support real-time and asynchronous communication between instructor and learners as well as among different learners” (p. 1). The multitude of media used to administer online learning includes, but is not limited to, video conferencing, webinars, watching pre-recorded lectures or videos online, real-time lectures, chat rooms, and discussion boards.

The advantages of online learning also include the ability to teach and learn both synchronously and asynchronously. Synchronous education refers to learning that occurs at one time, that is, when people are learning at the same. However, instruction can happen in either a physical or a virtual environment (U.S. Department of Education,
Online education provides synchronous learning through modes such as discussion or chat rooms and real-time lectures via the Internet. Conversely, asynchronous learning does not require the attention of students and teachers in real-time. Rather, learners can access and interact with their own learning at any time through web media by downloading documents, engaging in threaded discussions, or sending messages to other peers or teachers (Hrastinski, 2008).

Defined, online learning refers to removing any face-to-face interaction, but allowing synchronous and asynchronous communication between students and instructors. These communications include electronic mail, posting of notices, streaming video, discussion boards, and chat rooms (Baglione & Nastanski, 2007). In addition, online learning provides that all regularly scheduled classroom time is replaced by required activities completed at distance and managed online. As described by Tallent-Runnels et al. (as cited in Clayton et al., 2010), online education is the use of Internet and communication technologies to teach students that are not located in the same physical location.

Using a conceptual framework, the United States Department of Education (2009) described online learning with three key components. First entails deciphering if an activity is a replacement or augmentation to traditional face-to-face instruction. The differences between the two are important as they distinguish dissimilarity in objectives. The second component refers to the pedagogical approach or type of learning experience, which determines how students obtain knowledge. Lastly, the conceptual framework
suggests identifying whether communication was primarily synchronous or asynchronous. In addition, it suggests determining if communication in online learning was in replacement or augmentation of face-to-face activities.

The online learning environment has increased in popularity as it provides access to information, content, course materials, and communication at anytime from any place (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). As noted by Benson (2002), Carliner (2004), and Conrad (as cited in Moore, Dickson-Deane, & Galyen, 2011), authors commonly describe online education as access to learning experiences through the use of technology. In sum, many prefer to describe online learning as learning that is entirely online (Oblinger & Oblinger as cited in Moore et al., 2011). Online education provides the opportunity for more students to pursue educational aspirations.

**Hybrid**

Hybrid learning provides a combination of face-to-face instruction with online learning. Hybrid courses are commonly referred to as blended learning. In part, learning occurs online, and as a result, the amount of classroom seat-time is reduced. Hybrid courses allow for some flexibility, but maintain constant face-to-face interaction with students and instructors. However, hybrid courses vary appreciably in the amount of seat time that is eliminated and the ratio of face-to-face time to online time (Brunner, 2006). Hybrid learning transcends the mentality of choosing either a face-to-face course or an online course (Brunner, 2006).
Furthermore, hybrid learning is also known as blended learning. Although this term is most commonly used by corporate organizations, it is synonymous with hybrid learning (Brunner, 2006). Mosher (as cited in Brunner, 2006) considers blended learning as the use of various learning modalities. Lim et al. (2007) designate blended learning instruction as a model intended to overcome the deficiencies of online instruction. In addition, it uses various instructional sequencing and delivery methods to augment student satisfaction in conjunction to increasing learning outcomes. Singh and Reed (as cited in Lim et al., 2007) designate blended learning typologies using six combinations of blended instruction: (a) offline and online learning, (b) self-paced, live, and collaborative learning, (c) structured and unstructured learning, (d) custom content with off-the-shelf content, (e) work and learning, and (f) ingredients blending synchronous physical formats, synchronous online formats, and self-paced, asynchronous formats. Singh and Reed’s (as cited in Lim et al., 2007) typologies present a sample of various groupings that may be a part of blended learning/hybrid learning.

Blended learning has not only modified the methods of traditional learning, but it has changed the meaning of the commonly held metaphor for higher education, “knowledge is power” (Dziuban et al., 2005, p. 11). The innovations of technology have impacted the gatekeepers of knowledge. Whereas universities, libraries, and professors served as the pathway to knowledge, it is now in the hands of the student or learner. According to Dziuban et al. (2005), a more suitable metaphor for higher education is “the
ability to use knowledge effectively is power” (p. 11). They suggest that younger generations now have more access to information than professors did in the past.

A hybrid course is designed by blending the components of face-to-face and online education. As observed by the Sloan-C Workshop on Blended Learning (as cited in Dziuban et al., 2005), the face-to-face and on line elements of a blended course should not be viewed as separate components by faculty and students. Rather, it is a blend of the two methods working harmoniously to enhance the benefits of both methods. However, hybrid courses should not be mistaken with web-enhanced courses, where they are defined as computer-mediated learning that provides more online learning and less face-to-face learning than a traditional course (Garnham & Kaleta as cited in Brunner, 2006; Learning Technology Center, 2004).

Strengths of Hybrid Education

Hybrid courses do not stray far from traditional and online classes, and the ability of hybrid courses to infuse the two methodologies allows for it to offer the best of both pedagogies. Online courses have proven their ability to develop written communication skills for students. Traditional face-to-face courses provide students the ability to practice speaking and listening skills in the classroom. Hybrid education permits both to occur (Brunner, 2006). Using hybrid or blended instruction provides the learning experience with many improvements including: improved pedagogy, easy access to
knowledge, more interaction among learners, personal presence, cost effectiveness, and ease of revision of learning content (Osguthorpe & Graham as cited in Lim et al., 2007).

**Access**

Upon conducting a study on the implementation of a hybrid model in an information security program, Tabor (2007) results indicate that there are many benefits to the hybrid model. His findings express that both time and flexibility are a common positive attribute for many students enrolled in hybrid course. The opportunity to spend less time in-class presents strong appeal to working students. In addition, Tabor (2007) indicates that hybrid education provides a variety of learning methods and tools for non-traditional students. Ultimately, the reduction in lecture during an academic term and the integration of multimedia components used with hybrid education allows for multiple opportunities for social interaction in two formats. The flexible format of hybrid education yields greater access to non-traditional students.

Moller, Forshay, and Huett (2008) mention that growth in distance education at universities and colleges are driven by economic and access driving forces. There is growth in populations of non-traditional students accessing post-secondary level education (Moller et al., 2008). Programs addressing mid-career and continuing professional education are increasingly popular and in demand. In theory, distance education programs can serve both remote and local learners providing access to these new populations of non-traditional students. In many instances, distance education is a mode of sustaining growth at colleges and universities (Moller et al., 2008).
The flexibility of hybrid education allows for non-traditional students, such as working professionals and stay-at-home parents, to receive the benefits of face-to-face instruction, but maintain the time flexibility for their fulltime careers or household responsibilities. Cooper (2008) indicates that the flexible schedule is more conducive to balancing work, school, and the family. Although traditional courses are highly favorable in academia, they limit access to potentially successful students (York, 2008). Hybrid courses have the ability to offer the convenience of forgoing in-class time for asynchronous learning. However, a common student misconception to take into account is that increased time flexibility does not translate into less coursework (Brunner, 2006).

Along with flexibility, hybrid courses offer access to a larger population of students, specifically non-traditional students including adult learners. Within the last decade single parent, low-income and minority women have become the largest group among adult learners (Peter & Horn, 2005). In addition, hybrid courses have the ability to minimize or remove physical barriers and geographical restraints. Face-to-face classroom learning may not be accessible within some student’s immediate environment or is limited due to financial inability (Courville, 2011). In the event that a student does not reside near the school or institution offering on-ground courses, they may face limitations such as mode of transportation, cost of transportation, and feasibility of the commute. In definition, distance education provides the access to learning for those who are geographically distant, of which hybrid models also adhere to (Moore, Dickson-
Deane, & Galyen, 2011). Moreover, hybrid courses integrate technology to provide a vehicle for distance education while offering access to more students.

In efforts to provide wider access to student populations, hybrid courses provide the ability to combine virtual components of course sections. “Hybrid courses allow more class to be taught within the existing plant, which increases full-time equivalent students, and the virtual combination of sections results in reduced costs of direct instruction” (Koester, Hellenbrand, & Piper, 2008, p. 17). Because hybrid courses forego face-to-face time for learning that occurs online, separate course sections have the ability to interact virtually through the online experience. While class-time is reduced for the students and instructional time is minimized for the instructor, different course sections can have the ability to interact with each other online. This interaction not only allows for a greater exchange of knowledge, but also increases online learning communities.

In addition to offering access to student populations that do not have the time to attend traditional course offerings, hybrid education offers more student access to the components of education. The ability to access course materials at anytime and anyplace, and review them as much as needed is important to the hybrid student (Dziuban et al., 2005). According to Conn, Roberts, and Barbara (2009), hybrid models offer benefits to access in multiple respects. Students have access to peers and instructors outside of the classroom. In addition, students have access to information and content that is supplied by the instructor through online learning management systems. Students also have access to equal participation in online discussion threads and boards. Lastly, students have
access to observe interactions between other students and the instructor. As hybrid models incorporate technology through learning management systems or course management systems, such as Blackboard and Desire2Learn, conjunctively they expand the opportunities for exposure to content (Brunner, 2006).

Classroom content and learning can be limited to an instructor’s control with regards to the content that is presented in class or is limited by how much and what can be presented inside the classroom. However, hybrid courses remove these limitations by expanding the amount and opportunities for additional content. Aycock (as cited in Brunner, 2006) indicated that ideally, learners’ first contact with content should be outside of the face-to-face setting. The learning management systems within hybrid courses allow for such early exposure of content to occur prior to class meetings. As lesson plans develop and relevant current content is applicable, instructors can share information in between face-to-face meetings with students. Furthermore, students have the ability to research and examine the content and material before and after face-to-face class meetings. Also, access to content lectures and presentations allows students the advantage of referencing back to in-class content they would have needed to research further for better understanding.

Hybrid courses provide a blend of online learning and face-to-face instruction and address varying learning styles (Story & DiElsi, 2003). The ability for instructors to use multimodal tools provides diversified learning experiences, which appeals to a wider range of learning styles (O’Byrne & Heaten, 2008). Instructors have the ability to
provide students with links to video or audio presentations, speeches, or clips. In addition, Brunner (2006) suggested the hybrid model compels faculty to introduce varied ways of learning in the face-to-face components of the course. Learning is no longer limited to lecture-based classroom presentation. Also, faculty seeks alternative methods of learning by introducing multimedia and interactive elements to classroom learning.

Innovative technology has brought about the ability to change education and provide for a new way for learning to occur. Teaching and learning dynamics have changed and continue to evolve. Grounded in two theoretical approaches, experiential and inquiry-based learning, Doering, Miller, and Veletsianos (2008) introduce adventure learning, a model of distance education or hybrid education. Adventure learning provides a learning experience that includes interaction between students and content experts throughout the world using an online learning component and through an online environment. Similar to a hybrid course, this model blends the modalities of the classroom and online environments. Doering et al. (2008) have discovered that adventure learning addresses the educational, social, and technological affordances required for a successful collaborative online learning. Adventure learning provides greater access to a diverse student population and greater means of communication.

**Communication**

In blending the traditional face-to-face course with the online course, the skill sets of each unite in a hybrid model. Specifically, in a blended course there are more opportunities to learn and practice additional and diverse forms of communication with
hybrid delivery (O’Byrne & Heaten, 2008). In addition, communication is increased when there is more individual contact between instructor and student, more immediate feedback on assignments, and information sharing with students and instructors (O’Byrne & Heaten, 2008). Hybrid models not only allow students to develop traditional communication skills, such as verbal and written, but they also provide for opportunities to learn online communication skills such as virtual body language (Baglione & Nastanski, 2007).

Hybrid courses provide more substantive and constructive discussion online than in informal classroom discussions. This is in part due to a threaded discussions ability to drive preparation and reflection. This inherent expectation to research and reflect ideas, combined with the physical anonymity of being outside of the classroom, provides a superior form of discussion, as indicated by Baglione and Nastanski (2007). Asynchronous or threaded discussions are most popular in online and hybrid learning as they also support the flexibility of the adult learner and allow time for review. Moreover, it enhances the richness and variety of discussion. Experienced professors even indicate that part of the effectiveness of online discussions is also due to the equitable distribution (Baglione & Nastanski, 2007). Overall, online discussions allow students to develop strong communication skills.

To implement hybrid programs, the technological components of a course rely on software that allows students and instructors to manage the content and information effectively. This system for learning uses a platform most commonly referred to as a
Learning Management Systems, but is also known as Virtual Learning Environments, Digital Learning Environments, Course Management Systems and Electronic Learning Environments (De Smet, Bourgonjon, De Wever, Schellens, & Valcke, 2012). Learning Management Systems are web-based applications that are accessible through Internet from any place at any time. Cole and Foster (as cited in De Smet et al., 2007) suggest that Learning Management Systems function as a tool for educators to use in creating course websites and access to learning material. A primary reason for using Learning Management Systems is to provide a simulated in-class experience in the online environment for a reasonable cost (Koester et al., 2008). Leading companies that provide Learning Management Systems include Blackboard and Moodle. The growth of online and hybrid learning has been reflected in the use of these systems. In a recent report by Educause, it was shown that 90% of American colleges and Universities stated using a Learning Management System at their institution (Arroway, Davenport, Xu, & Updergrove as cited in De Smet et al., 2012).

The Hybrid model also serves to prepare students for in-class learning. Exposure to content and lecture prior to face-to-face meetings provides the student with a greater opportunity to advance their learning more effectively in the classroom during discussions, lecture, and activities (Tabor, 2007). Conversely, “student groups formed in person seem to interact more effectively during online communication sessions” (Tabor, 2007, p. 48). Thus, hybrid education utilizes its model to improve communication and effectiveness in both traditional and online learning models. However, hybrid models
should be designed with specific purposes (Osguthorpe & Graham as cited in Tabor, 2007). Osguthorpe and Graham (as cited in Tabor, 2007) suggested six goals to hybrid design: (1) pedagogical richness, (2) access to knowledge, (3) social interaction, (4) personal agency, (5) cost effectiveness, and (6) ease of revision.

In reviewing the related literature, it is apparent that hybrid education produces strong learning communities or virtual communities. In comparing three graduate courses, each of which used different pedagogies (one traditional, one blended, and one online), Rovai and Jordan (2004) found that students in the blended course measured the highest in building a sense of community, comparable to the traditional course. Tabor (2007) suggested that students are more likely to initiate additional communication within small group space online than in an area for the full class, creating communities in the virtual environment. Hybrid courses use online social experiences as a learning community through wikis, discussion boards and threaded discussions. In doing so, it helps achieve the social requirements associated with learning, as designated by both cognitive and constructivist learning theory (Ravenscroft, 2011). Maushak and Ou (2007) stated that based on student surveys, student satisfaction with distance education is similar to that of traditional face-to-face classrooms.

Constructivism assumes that learners gain knowledge through a process in which they learn from their experiences. According to Driscoll (2005), “Learners, therefore, are not empty vessels waiting to be filled, but rather active organisms seeking meaning” (p. 387). The constructivist theory indicates that learners develop skills through
collaboration, critical thinking, and personal inquiry. According to constructivism, the learner is the one who maintains their knowledge (Coneição & Taylor, 2007). Walker and Lambart (1995) indicated that knowledge and beliefs exist within the learner, and activities based around learning should cause learners to access them. Fosnot (1996) indicated that learning does not come from development, but instead learning is development. Learning can occur by providing access and awareness to past experiences (Walker & Lambart, 1995).

As a developmental stage theory cognitive constructivism is self directed, experiential, problem based, and discovery. It is a form that focuses on reflection and transformative learning (Hean, Craddock, & O’Halloran, 2009). Where as social constructivism is mediated by the environment through situated and collaborative learning (Hean et al., 2009). Thus, constructivism accounts for the learning process. Jonassen et al. (1999) refer to the practice of constructivism as Constructivist Learning Environments. These environments are defined as technology founded spaces where students can engage and reflect on their doings to learn from their experiences (Jonassen et al., 1999). Constructive Learning Environments are advantageous as they provide more student-centered learning and collaboration (Jonassen et al., 1999). Therefore, constructivism supports hybrid-learning platforms, and vice versa, for a successful adult learning experience.

Online learning communities allow for a multitude of discussion and socialization in which people effectively learn information when experiencing and defining knowledge
through social contexts (Dempsy & Van Eck, 2007). Furthermore, knowledge management is the basis for an instructional method known as blended learning, where individuals are taught within traditional means such as the classroom, but also through technological means (Rosenberg, 2001). Rosenberg (2001) defined knowledge management as “the creation, archiving, and sharing of valued information, expertise, and insight within and across communities of people and organizations with similar interests and needs” (p. 157). Moreover, virtual communities develop strong analytical and thinking skills (Baglione & Nastanski, 2007).

**Non-traditional Student Learning**

As the use of hybrid courses becomes more common at institutions of higher education, the way in which students learn within these courses must be considered when evaluating a course’s effectiveness. Students at a graduate level have evolved from adolescents to adults, and the manner in which they learn has changed. The flexibility of hybrid courses attracts the non-traditional student – working adults balancing the demands of multiple obligations – and these new populations of students, now considered adult learners, gain knowledge differently. Moreover, according to Adult Learning Theory (ALT) children and adults learn differently (Simmons, 2007).

The difference between adult and child learning is so distinct that it is coined as andragogy by Malcolm S. Knowles, which is separate and distinctive from pedagogy. Andragogy as an adult learning theory is explained through a set of assumptions: (1) the need to know or motivation to learn; (2) learner self-concept; (3) the role of the learners’
experience; (4) the readiness to learn; and (5) the orientation to learning (Knowles, 1990). These five concepts of andragogy reflect the notion of a self-directed learner (Taylor & Kroth, 2009). In addition, andragogy reflects the notion of learner-focused education (Yoshimoto, Inenega, & Yamada, 2007). Since hybrid learning provides a non-traditional learning environment, it is highly desirable and suitable to non-traditional adult learners.

Counterposed to andragogy is pedagogy, most commonly used to describe the teaching of children. This mode emphasizes socialization of students and attributes the role of a teacher as teaching and taking care of students (Yoshimoto et al., 2007). Pedagogy assumes that students will learn what they are told or taught by an educator (McGrath, 2009). However, despite the common association of pedagogy with children, the theory may still apply to adults. Based on pedagogical experiences, many adult learners return to education environments expecting the same experience (pedagogy) and deflect the experience of an adult learning environment (andragogy).

Knowles (as cited in McGrath, 2009) explained that pedagogy assumes the following: (1) students only need to learn what the teacher teaches; (2) the adult learning experience is not needed for learning; and (3) the teacher assumes the learner is dependent. In this model, the focus of education is on transmitting content that is teacher-directed and teacher-controlled (Pew, 2007). In essence, pedagogy reflects the notion of teacher-focused education (Yoshimoto et al., 2007).
The characteristics of adult learners set by Knowles (as cited in Simmons, 2007) purported his argument that teaching adults should be different than teaching children. His research indicates that as adults, the individual has transitioned from being dependent to being self-directed. In addition, by the time of adulthood, the individual has gained enough experience to contribute and inform his or her own learning. Knowles (as cited in Simmons, 2007) also accentuated that the adult has developed a need to apply learning immediately. Moreover, learning shifts from teaching children (pedagogy) to helping adults learn (andragogy). Knowles (as cited in Simmons, 2007) defined this as self-directed learning, where teaching transforms into facilitating.

Grow (1991) built on Knowles’ research and proposes a staged self-directed learning model. This model indicates that every student is in fact different. Grow (1991) acknowledged that by nature, not all students are self-directed, rather less dependent. Given the difference, teachers are then obliged to use different teaching techniques and different teaching styles. In addition, these changes also provide that the role of the teacher will be different for different types of learners. Grow (1991) explored how courses can use different teaching styles to meet the needs of various learners, progressing towards self-direction. In modern teaching practices, it is hybrid education that provides answers for the call of self-directed learners whom have varying needs. The hybrid modality allows for different techniques to be combined and implemented during the learning process.
Utilizing hybrid education yields to the needs of the adult learner as their experiences have an impact on their learning. The hybrid-learning model allows for existing knowledge, values and beliefs to be reframed and reinterpreted (Cooner, 2009). As defined by, and similar to, a study of BA Social Work Students in a blending learning design, this type of education is based on constructivist theoretical paradigm. As defined by Vygotsky and Cole (as cited in Cooner, 2009, p. 273), this paradigm indicates that students bring personal history, knowledge and experiences to learning community.

Challenges to Hybrid Education

As a subset of technological advancement in the world of education, hybrid courses face many limitations and challenges. Although hybrid education is commonly seen as the solution for blending the face-to-face experience with the online learning experience, limitations and challenges still exist for students and instructors. Because hybrid education blends the methods of online courses and traditional courses, it also absorbs some of the challenges and limitations of both of these methods. Tabor (2007) indicates that challenges presented in his study of a hybrid security course included: self-managed time skills required, some missed excessive class meetings, less ability to observe learning success, topics not covered in class perceived to be of lesser value, and difficult to design challenging online activities for technical topics.
Interaction

One of the common limitations noted by skeptics of online education is the lack of personal interaction and communication. Although hybrid education minimizes this limitation with its combination of face-to-face time with online learning, it persists to remain a challenge for this type of learning. The evolution of technology has inevitably constructed a population of students conditioned to communicate electronically with peers (Baglione & Nastanski, 2007). Furthermore, learning personal communication skills is debunked within online and hybrid models of learning.

While hybrid education may provide a platform for all students to engage and interact electronically, it also teaches students to rely on technological tools for these kinds of opportunities. Components of hybrid education that occur online do not provide the spontaneous responses and social interactions that happen in the classroom (Desai et al., 2008). Moreover, online education, in general, allows for the growth of social disconnect between students as it replaces social interaction with electronic interaction.

Expectations from instructors and students change within the context of hybrid courses. The availability and access to greater resources, such as greater use of the Internet and technology, allow faculty to increase their expectations. Additionally, because independent learning occurs more frequently with students in hybrid courses, the faculty introduces more challenging teaching into their courses, sometimes resulting in greater workload than traditional face-to-face courses (Brunner, 2006).
Conversely, students may also change and increase the expectations of the faculty role in hybrid courses. The students of today are raised with instant access to information and communication methods (Desai et al., 2008). Simmons (2007) suggested that adult learners have a need for immediacy learning. When factored-in with the constant use of technology in everyday life, it bestows the need for faculty to be more readily available and responsive. However, the success of hybrid education is partially relying on the interaction of faculty. According to Tabor (2007), students required more feedback for online components. Furthermore, students accustomed to receiving immediate feedback in the classroom were seeking the same response time in the online environment.

Jackson and Helms (2008) indicated that along with technology issues, faculty interaction is a common concern and limitation for students in hybrid courses. As discussed by Brunner (2006), “Technology does not make a good teacher; rather good teaching makes effective use of any tool, including technology, in support of overall pedagogy and course design” (p. 230). Furthermore, students still identify instructor interaction as a need within hybrid courses, but see it as a limitation when face-to-face interaction with instructor is limited. Results from Jackson and Helms (2008) analysis indicate that students see the instructor as having supplemental knowledge and material that will enhance the learning experience, and reduced personal interaction leads to miscommunication and misinterpretation of material.

Given that technology takes a large role in hybrid education interaction, it also contributes to many challenges for both the student and instructor. Hybrid courses’
reliability on technology and Internet access also serve as limitations to the style of learning and course management. Technology is prone to viruses, malware, and impromptu crashes of equipment, presenting greater risks for students enrolled in hybrid courses, which require frequent online interaction and assignments. In addition, students without access to Internet at home are challenged to find alternate locations for access, including traveling to the college campus (Jackson & Helms, 2008).

Curriculum, Instruction, and Leadership

Because hybrid education involves the combination of online and traditional modalities, part of the challenges include determining what should be covered in which format (Tabor, 2007). Moreover, which pieces of curriculum should be delivered online versus which pieces of curriculum should be delivered in the classroom face-to-face. The pedagogy chosen for each component, online and face-to-face, is important in the success or failure of a hybrid course. As mentioned by Doering et al. (2008), the online learning environment must support the curricular goals, as does the in-class curriculum. In other words, efforts to avoid creating a computer supported collaborative learning environment versus implementing a successful hybrid approach will require the consideration for the selection of an appropriate pedagogy to support the instructional goals of the curriculum (Doering et al., 2008).

With distance education, specifically hybrid learning, educators face challenges in pedagogical issues. Many of which are pertaining to student interactions, design of course content, and delivery of curriculum and differing levels of communication. Many
educators must commit to defining new types of assignments, classroom performance
guidelines and expectations, and different assessments and evaluations (Moller et al.,
2008). A face-to-face classroom experience cannot be easily transposed to a distance
education, hybrid or online model.

Most of the changes in curriculum delivery and pedagogy are left for faculty.
With a change in modality, faculty is charged with developing new courses for distance
education formats, new methods for controlling the learning process, collaboration, and
concerns of intellectual property rights. In addition, faculty faces concerns of training,
workload, promotion, tenure, and research (Moller et al., 2008). Moller et al. (2008) also
suggested three contentions of online learning. First, learning that occurs online involves
more work in development, maintenance, and contact time with students. Second,
professors fear lower evaluation scores from students. Third, online learning comes with
a stigma that professors are not working as laboriously as in face-to-face courses.

Technology has played an integral part in changing methods of teaching and
learning. Thus, bringing about the combination of face-to-face instruction with online
learning for a new methodology of hybrid learning. However, the evolution of hybrid
education is demanding change to classroom culture, including teaching, and learning.
As indicated by Koester et al. (2008), “changes in demographics, technology, and law
require our institutions to constantly evolve” (p. 13). This inevitable evolution brings
forth a new challenge for university leadership at colleges and universities choosing to
integrate hybrid models into their educational framework. Not only will there be a need
to change classroom culture, but there will also be a need to change university culture. Instructors, students, and administration across campuses will need to accept change and partake in transformation.

The tremendous amount of information that is provided by computers and the Internet provide new ways in which students and teachers can discover education (Desai et al., 2008). Technology has transformed the ways in which information is gathered and distributed. Thus, institutions are no longer the single source of information distribution, nor are professors the single gatekeepers of knowledge (Desai et al., 2008). Students have become experts in technological advancements, and education has fallen behind. Thus, the needs of the learner have changed in an unchanging environment.

Melville-Ross (2010) conveyed that higher education must adapt its leadership, its form of governance, and its method of management in order to sustain its educational relevance. His approach provides insight into the future of higher education, distinguishing the need and encouraging the emersion for change agent leaders at colleges and universities. Change is inevitable and instrumental in ensuring the survival and success of higher education. As indicated by Melville-Ross (2010), significant and relevant challenges will face the future of higher education. “The sector will need to manage continuous, particularly technological, change as a matter of routine, and will need to be more responsive to a wide range of customer and stakeholder needs” (Melville-Ross, 2010, p. 4). Moreover, it is important to understand, distinctively for
educational leaders, that the make-up of higher education is changing and institutions must entertain and facilitate transformation.

Furthermore, change and challenge become synonymous, requiring strategy and tact for university leadership. Changes important to transforming organizational structure in higher education include integrating hybrid courses, using collaboration, using evidence to influence, transforming culture and awareness of ongoing challenges (Koester et al., 2008). Whether it is the president of the university or college dean, strategy will be needed for effective transformation and implementation of new methods of instruction such as the hybrid model.

Also, understanding the pushback that may occur across the university, strategies such as those developed at the California State University Northridge should be considered for effective change (Koester et al., 2008). California State University Northridge implemented what is known as a triple threat method: (1) Clear evidence of student learning, (2) Proof of faculty and staff learning, and (3) Evidence of institutional change based on learning. In addition, transforming cultures that involve technology should consider: “Deploying technology so that it facilitates measurable advances in learning, quickening the pace of comprehension and, when possible, reducing cost (Koester et al., 2008, p. 16).

Non-traditional Student Learning

Hybrid courses require that students encompass the ability to function independently in the learning process (Brunner, 2006). Thus, hybrid courses do not
provide a solution for all student populations. It is important for students enrolling in hybrid-structured classes to understand their motivation and learning strategies because they might impact their achievement (Clayton et al., 2010). Online coursework for hybrid classes contain material that must be learned independently and timely. Thus, a student’s preferred learning style will have an impact on their success in online or hybrid courses.

Cassidy (as cited in Kratzig & Arbuthnott, 2006) states that a person’s learning style can be determined by a grouping of different characteristics including cognitive, affective, and psychological. According to Zapalska and Dabb (as cited in Kratzig & Arbuthnott, 2006), the ability to absorb and retain information well depends on if the information was received in one’s preferred learning style. Dunn indicated that auditory learners prefer information they can hear, while visual learners prefer information they can see and kinesthetic learners prefer information in environments where they can be physically involved (Dunn, 1993).

According to the University of Indiana, hybrid courses may result in more work for the student in trying to keep-up with scheduled activities and more work for the professor in coaching students through the model (Reason as cited in Tabor, 2007). Many times, learners who are accustomed to traditional methods struggle with the change of electronic and face-to-face variances. This may lead to stress, frustration, and anxiety caused by breakdowns in communication or difficulties in technology (Desai et al., 2008).
McMillan and Chavis (as cited in Lim et al., 2007) found there might also be some implications for a learners’ psychological state in blended and online learning environments. Learners can develop feelings of lacking support when they are not in the presence of an instructor and other students. Also, when there is a lack of presence or belonging, learners may experience increased workload (McMillan & Chavis as cited in Lim et al., 2007).

Summary

The literature that has been collected and compiled for this study was intended to develop a brief understanding of hybrid learning in higher education. Hybrid education has become a more commonly favorable solution to online learning as it combines the modality of both traditional courses and online courses. Although it has limitations, it can offer a multitude of benefits to the business of the university, learning pedagogy, and to students with different learning styles. With the infusion of technology, hybrid education has many benefits for the emerging population of students seeking technologically enhanced learning. Although some research has been conducted to assess perceptions of the effectiveness of hybrid education and changing pedagogical methods, this topic requires more research.
Chapter 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate student perspectives on hybrid education in an educational leadership and policy studies graduate program. Using a quantitative design, this study implemented an electronically assisted survey technique to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the learning limitations for students within a hybrid course?
2. How does a hybrid course meet the needs of the student?
3. What are the expectations of students within a hybrid course?
4. How does less face-to-face time affect the learning experience for students?

This chapter discusses the methodology and design used to conduct this research. The following areas are discussed in further detail: setting, population and sample, data collection instrumentation, and data analysis procedures.

Research Design

To examine student perspectives on the effectiveness of hybrid courses in higher education, data concerning students enrolled in courses for Educational Leadership and Policy Studies was collected. Mixed-methods were used to collect information through the use of an electronic questionnaire that was administered through SurveyGizmo, a
website survey tool. The survey was designed to answer the research questions through the use of closed-ended and open-ended questions. The data required for the needs of this analysis includes information on student profiles, learning style, and learning preference. Data that was also collected includes information regarding student experience with technology, student experience with hybrid courses and traditional courses, and reasons for enrolling in a hybrid course. In addition, information was collected on student needs and expectations from the course, and information on the perceptions of the expectations imposed by the instructor and workload within a hybrid course.

Setting of the Study

The research for this study was conducted at Capitol State University (CSU) located in the northern region of the state of California. Founded in 1947, CSU is comprised of seven academic colleges offering 58 undergraduate majors and 42 graduate degrees. Located on 300 acres in the center of a metropolitan area, CSU is one of 23 campuses that collectively comprise the California State University system.

As the seventh largest university within the California State University system, CSU provides extensive research and internship opportunities. The university maintains a small student to teacher ratio at 21 to 1 and about 70% of classes have fewer than 30 students. Although teacher education is the largest academic program, strong academic programs also include business, criminal justice, communication studies, psychology, and computer science.
Population and Sample

The population of CSU varies in student class ranking, age, gender, ethnicity, and major. Research for this study was conducted at CSU in the spring of 2012. However, the most current data for CSU was provided in the 2011 University Fact Book. In the fall of 2010, CSU had a student population of 28,016 of which 88% of the population is undergraduate students and 12% is graduate students. The undergraduate student population is composed of 57% female and 43% male students; the graduate student population consists of 69% female and 32% male. In addition, the student population of CSU reflects a high percentage of commuters to the CSU campus: 93.7% of undergraduate students commute to the university and 99.7% of graduate students commute to the university (Office of Institutional Research [OIR], 2011).

The sample for this study reflects master’s degree students enrolled in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at CSU. The most current data for Educational Leadership and Policy Studies was provided in the 2011 University Fact Book (OIR, 2011). In the fall of 2010, 165 graduate students were enrolled in departmental studies. This represents 11% of the College of Education graduate student population. The departmental graduate student population consisted 60% female and 40% male. Enrollments included new students, continuing students, and returning students.

Collaboration and approval with the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies department was crucial and important in the researcher’s process. In working with the
department, 81 students were identified and contacted by electronic mail. Every student was asked to participate in the study by completing an electronic questionnaire. The electronic mail message included an attached letter of consent to participate in the study. Students were prompted to follow the electronic link to the survey if they granted consent to participate. This electronic message was only provided to graduate students whom were currently enrolled in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies programs. The 81 students represented cohorts that began their program of study in the fall 2010, fall 2011 and spring 2012 semesters.

Data Collection

The data was collected using an anonymous questionnaire through SurveyGizmo.com, an Internet based survey tool. An electronic consent form was required prior to the participation of any student in the study. Upon consent of the student, access to an electronic questionnaire was available by providing a direct website link to the survey. Due to the nature of the hybrid model to use consistent electronic communication, all questionnaires were distributed and administered electronically. By collaborating with the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies department, links were provided to students by electronic mail.

Preliminary preparation. The researcher compiled a survey and letter of consent for iteration. Other graduate students and program faculty reviewed the survey and letter of consent for comprehension and approval. Upon finalizing the questionnaire, the researcher transposed all survey questions to SurveyGizmo.com. In addition, to avoid
any compromise of the letter of consent, the researcher converted the document to a secure document for electronic use and distribution.

*Survey administration.* Upon completing the conversion of the survey questions into SurveyGizmo.com, the researcher published the survey and produced a customized link. Collaborating with the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies department, the researcher was provided access to email addresses for students currently enrolled in departmental studies. The researcher crafted and sent an email to students indicating the purpose of the study, including the customized link to the survey and attaching the letter of consent. The email, letter of consent, and survey can be found in Appendices A, B, and C, respectively. The survey was available to students for a two-week period of time and a reminder email was sent one week prior to the closing of the survey.

*Instrumentation.* The tools used and required to be accessed by the participants of the study included a working computer, the Internet with website browser, and access to SurveyGizmo.com. As a technology based survey, students were expected to have suitable access to working computers with Internet and website browser capabilities. In addition, students were required to have a working electronic mail address. The SurveyGizmo.com website allowed for the questionnaire to be built and administered electronically. In addition, it captured and tabulated data efficiently and provided the ability for respondents to complete the survey at their own pace.

*Data analysis procedures.* Results from the questionnaire were also tabulated through the use of SurveyGizmo.com. To analyze the findings, the researcher created a
summary report of the results. In addition, the researcher organized the results as they related to the research questions. The following chapter will present the findings in the areas of sample population characteristics, learning limitations in hybrid courses, student needs in hybrid courses, student expectations of hybrid courses, and impact of reduced face time on learning experience. By combining the findings into groupings, the researcher was able to find patterns and themes that addressed each of the research questions that were presented.
Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

This study examined the effectiveness of hybrid courses using perspectives from students enrolled in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at CSU. Through the use of an electronic survey, quantitative and qualitative results were collected and tabulated to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the learning limitations for students within a hybrid course?
2. How does a hybrid course meet the needs of the student?
3. What are the expectations of students within a hybrid course?
4. How does less face-to-face time affect the learning experience for students?

This chapter analyzes the data and discuss the findings that were collected from student responses by the electronic questionnaire. As indicated by the researcher’s questions above, the following areas are discussed in further detail: characteristics of sample population, learning limitations, student needs, student expectations, and student learning experience.
Characteristics of Sample Population

*Demographics*

The first six questions focused on student demographics and lifestyle characteristics. The sample population consisted of 36 graduate students enrolled in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies programs. In the spring of 2012, three cohorts of the program were concurrently offered within the department. These cohorts are identified by start year and semester. Moreover, cohorts from fall 2010, fall 2011 and spring 2012 were surveyed as part of the sample population. Of the 81 students whom were sent an electronic survey, 36 responded. This yielded a response rate of 44%. Table 1 reflects a distribution of ages for graduate student who responded to the electronic questionnaire.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>% Total Responses</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24-29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
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<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 displays the age distribution of the sample population of these respondents. The age for graduate students ranged from 24 through 52, with a median
health at the age of 35. A majority of the students were under the age of 50, with one third of
respondents within an age range of 24-29, one third within an age range of 30-39, and
less than one third within an age range of 40-49. The minority of students was above the
age of 50. The results reflect a significant difference in gender distribution for the sample
population. Of the 36 respondents, 11 identified themselves as male, and the remaining
25 identified themselves as females. Thus, 69% of the sample population identified
themselves as female. Overall, a majority of graduate students who completed the survey
were female.

Respondents were also asked to indicate their marital status at the time of
completing the survey. Fourteen respondents identified themselves as single, two
responded to being in a domestic partnership, and 20 responded as being married. The
data shows that a majority of students were not single. Moreover, 61% of students
identified themselves as being in a domestic relationship while they were enrolled in
graduate programs.

Students were also asked to indicate whether they had any children or dependents
while enrolled in the Educational Leadership and Policies department. A majority of
respondents did not have any children or dependents. However, 42% responded to
having children or dependents while enrolled in their program of study.

When asked about their enrollment status, 28% indicated that they were enrolled
as part-time. Part-time was identified as being enrolled in six or fewer units of graduate
study. In addition, 72% of the students reported being enrolled as full-time. Full-time
was defined as being enrolled in more than six units of graduate study. Overall, approximately three-fourths of the respondents were full-time graduate students.

In addition to student enrollment status, respondents were asked about their employment status. Survey question six provided the following options to select from: employed full-time, employed part-time, student, retired, or unemployed. At 89%, an overwhelming majority identified their employment status as full-time. In addition, 8% identified themselves as being students only. The remaining 3% identified themselves as unemployed. The survey collected data regarding student demographics and student characteristics.

Figure 1    Student Characteristics

Figure 1 represents a portion of the data collected regarding demographics and characteristics that present strong themes in the sample population. A majority of
students enrolled in graduate courses, particularly in Higher Educational Leadership Studies, identified having multiple roles and responsibilities during their enrollment. A majority of respondents hold full-time employment positions while enrolled in full-time graduate programs. In addition, many respondents are in domestic relationship and have children or dependents. Overall, the data supports the notion that the survey respondents are identified as non-traditional students, or otherwise adult learners.

Hybrid Considerations

Survey questions 7-10 asked students about graduate program selection, hybrid consideration, and hybrid participation. Question seven asked students to select what types of program schedules they considered when applying to a graduate degree program. 92% of students expressed that they considered evening programs when selecting graduate programs that they were interested in attending. However, 11% also indicated that schedule was not important in selecting a program. Only 3% considered enrolling in daytime programs. In addition, only 22% of students considered selecting a graduate program that was considered hybrid. The remaining 78% of respondents did not consider hybrid courses when selecting a graduate program.

Prior to enrolling in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies programs, 69% of respondents had not enrolled in any course that was considered hybrid. Thus, a majority of the students surveyed had never experienced a course in hybrid format prior to enrolling in a CSU Educational Leadership and Policy studies program. However, 30%
of students indicated that they had prior experience with hybrid courses. Moreover, one third of students had taken a hybrid course before. To capture the amount of hybrid course experience, the researcher included questions about the number of hybrid courses each respondent had taken.

Figure 2   Number of Hybrid Courses Taken

These responses included courses they had taken through Educational Leadership and Policy Studies programs. However, these responses were not exclusive to Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. Sixty-nine percent of respondents indicated they had taken a minimum of two hybrid courses at the time the survey was administered. The maximum number of hybrid courses taken by any one respondent was 10. Classes taken by students that were not a part of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies included: English, Ethics, Business, and Diversity in Education. Students also identified previous experience in hybrid courses through the Literacy Design Collaborative,
bachelor’s degree courses, and other master’s degree programs. Also, 31% of respondents admitted to having no experience with hybrid courses. These students had not taken any hybrid courses at the time the survey was administered.

Prior to completing additional questions specific to hybrid course learning, students were asked to identify their experience with hybrid courses. Question 29 asked: Have you ever been enrolled in a hybrid course? Or are currently enrolled in a hybrid course and have experience both online and face-to-face components? Five students responded that they had never been enrolled in a hybrid course or had not experienced both online and face-to-face components of a hybrid course. These respondents were prompted to the end of the electronic survey and were not required to complete questions 30 through 40.

The remaining respondents were prompted to question number 30. Eighty-six percent of the students who started the survey continued to complete the survey. This question asked students to identify which program or course they most recently experienced with the hybrid model. Forty-two percent of respondents identified Educational Leadership and Policy Studies as their most recent experience with hybrid courses. The other courses that were identified by students included: English, Ethics, Business, and Diversity in Education, the Literacy Design Collaborative, bachelor’s degree courses, and other master’s degree program courses.

In summary, the data supports the information collected in the previous section. Students electing to enroll in graduate programs considered programs that provided
flexible schedules. Ninety-two percent of students showed a preference for evening programs, and 89% of students identified themselves as employed full-time. In addition, this section provided data regarding student experience with hybrid education. Eighty-six percent of the sample population had sufficient knowledge to complete survey questions specific to the hybrid education experience.

**Learning Limitations for Students within Hybrid Courses**

Contemporary hybrid courses use learning management systems to administer the distance education or out-of-class portions of courses. Thus, the researcher included questions about technology and computers as part of the survey. Question 11 asked students for their level of experience using learning management systems such as SacCT, WebCT, and Moodle. Ninety-two percent of students indicated having at least some experience using learning management systems. At least 75% of respondents reported having a moderate to high level of experience using learning management systems. However, only 30% responded to having a high level of experience with this type of software. Overall, only 3% of students did not have any experience with learning management systems.

Students were also asked about their level of experience using computers. All respondents replied to having experience using computers. Eighty-one percent noted that they had a high level of experience using computers. The remaining 19% of students admitted to only having a moderate level of experience using computers. Thus, all respondents had moderate to high level of experience using computers.
In addition, students were asked about their level of comfort with the format of hybrid courses. A majority of respondents were comfortable with the structure of hybrid courses. Eighty-nine percent of the sample population agreed that they were at least somewhat comfortable with hybrid courses. The remaining 11% did not feel very comfortable with hybrid courses. Of the 89% of respondents who were at least somewhat comfortable, only 30% expressed being very comfortable with the format of hybrid courses. Survey questions 17 and 18 asked students to distinguish the level of importance for interaction in online courses and face-to-face courses.

Table 2

Online Interaction versus Face-to-face Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction with course instructor</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction with other students</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 reflects responses to survey questions 17 and 18. Survey question 17 asked students about the importance of interaction with the course instructor in both online and face-to-face settings. Seventy-two percent of respondents agreed that face-to-face interaction with the course instructor was very important. However, only 42% of students felt that online interaction with the course instructor was very important. Conversely, 3% of respondents felt that interaction with the instructor was not important in a face-to-face course. Furthermore, 11% of respondents agreed that interaction with the instructor was not important in an online course.

Similarly, survey question 18 asked students about the importance of interaction in both online and face-to-face settings. However, this question was directed towards interaction with other students. Twenty-five percent of respondents agreed that face-to-face interaction with other students enrolled in the course was very important. In addition, 25% of respondents felt that online interaction with other classmates was very important as well. In opposition, 6% of respondents felt that interaction with other students was not important in a face-to-face course. Also, 14% of respondents agreed that interaction with other students was not important in an online course either. Survey questions 19 and 20 asked students to distinguish the likelihood of contributing to course discussion more than the minimum requirement in hybrid courses and face-to-face courses.
Table 3

Contribution to Course Discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likelihood of Contribution to Course Discussion</th>
<th>Not Very</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>Likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 reflects responses to survey questions 19 and 20. Survey question 19 inquired about student’s contribution to classroom interaction and discussion. Students were asked the likelihood of contributing to classroom discussion in a face-to-face course more than the minimum that is required by classroom syllabus, guidelines, or lesson plan. At 50%, half of respondents indicated that they were very likely to contribute to classroom discussion in a face-to-face course. Overall, 95% of students are likely to contribute to face-to-face classroom discussion more than required.

Survey question 20 asked about students’ contribution to classroom interaction and discussion in hybrid courses. Students were asked the likelihood of contributing to discussion boards in a hybrid course more than the minimum that is required by classroom syllabus, guidelines, or lesson plan. However, only 14% of respondents indicated that they were very likely to contribute to discussion boards more than the
minimum requirement in a hybrid course. Overall, 75% of students are likely to contribute to face-to-face classroom discussion more than required.

In comparing face-to-face courses and hybrid courses, student responses also indicated that more students were likely not to contribute anything more than the minimum in hybrid course discussion boards. Twenty-five percent of students responded that they were not very likely to contribute more than the minimum in discussion board posting assignments. In contrast, only 6% of students responded that they were not very likely to contribute more than the minimum in face-to-face classroom discussions. However, a majority of students would be likely to contribute more than the minimum requirement in both hybrid and face-to-face courses.

Student Needs and Hybrid Courses

In efforts to assess the learning characteristics and needs of students, the researcher asked questions about learning styles and how different course delivery formats meet student learning needs.
Table 4

Learning Styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating*</th>
<th>Visual Learner</th>
<th>Auditory Learner</th>
<th>Kinesthetic/Tactile Learner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 1 represents a student’s best match for learning style. 5 represents a student’s least match for learning style.

Table 4 represents results from survey question 14. This question asked students to rate learning styles according to their ability to learn within each style. Using a Likert-type scale of 1 to 5, students were asked to rate three common learning styles: Visual Learner, Auditory Learner and Kinesthetic/Tactile Learner. A rating of 1 represented the best match of a students learning style, and a rating of 5 represented the least match of a students learning style.

Thirty-three percent of students identified themselves as visual learners. This means, that they learned best in environments that used visual tools and styles. However, 28% of students admitted to learning least through visual components. Only 14% of
respondents indicated that their preferred learning style was auditory. Also, 17% of respondents indicated that their preferred learning style was kinesthetic or tactile. According to the results represented in Table 4, most of the respondents rated visual learning with a 1 or a 2 to indicate this as their best match for learning.

Table 5
Course Type and Learning Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit of Course Type to Learning Style</th>
<th>Not Well</th>
<th>Moderately Well</th>
<th>Well</th>
<th>Very Well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 represents results from survey questions 15 and 16. Survey question 15 required students to consider their preferred learning style and asked how well a face-to-face course suited their learning style. Sixty-one percent of students felt that face-to-face courses met their learning style very well. However, 100% of students agreed that face-to-face courses suited their learning style moderately well or better. Not one student indicated that face-to-face courses did not fit their learning style well.

The researcher posed a similar inquiry for survey question 16, but referred to hybrid courses. Again, this question required students to consider their preferred learning style. Respondents were asked how well a hybrid course suited their learning style. Only 22% of students indicated that hybrid courses met their learning style very well. A total
of 81% of students agreed that hybrid courses suited their learning style moderately well or better. However, 19% of students identified that hybrid courses did not meet their learning styles well.

Survey question 23 required respondents to consider their learning needs within a course. Based on the respondent’s experience, they were asked how well a hybrid course suited their classroom needs. Twenty-five percent of students felt that a hybrid course did not meet their classroom needs at all. Only 14% of students agreed that hybrid courses met their needs very well. In addition, 30% of students agreed hybrid courses met their classroom needs somewhat well, and 30% agreed that hybrid courses met their needs well. Overall, 75% of respondents felt that hybrid courses met their classroom needs.

Furthermore, students were asked to identify classroom needs that they felt were not met by hybrid courses, if any existed. The researcher chose to collect responses through a qualitative open-ended survey question. By compiling the responses into themes, the researcher noticed a majority of responses expressed concerns in the areas of feedback, face-to-face interaction, and instructor communication. Rather, hybrid courses did not meet most students’ needs in these three areas. One respondent indicated, “The instructor did not respond in a timely manner to email requests.” The same student compared his hybrid experience to his face-to-face experience, as he stated, “In the classroom, they [instructor] have to answer your questions.” In addition, another student
felt their experience in a hybrid course lacked face-to-face interaction and “the ability to connect with teacher and classmates.”

Survey question 25 was directed towards a student’s preference for either traditional courses or hybrid courses. Respondents were asked to consider their experiences with both hybrid and traditional courses. Based on their experience, the survey asked which course method they preferred, traditional, or hybrid. To reinforce the definition of each type of course, the researcher identified traditional courses as face-to-face and hybrid courses as a combination of online and face-to-face. Sixty-one percent of respondents preferred traditional courses to hybrid courses. Thirty-nine percent of respondents preferred hybrid courses to traditional courses.

Survey question 34 focused on workload of students. The question also asked students to consider their experiences with both traditional and hybrid courses. Respondents were asked to compare the intensity of workload in a hybrid course to that of a traditional course. With 58%, a majority of students agreed that the workload of traditional courses and hybrid courses were about the same. However, 22% agreed that hybrid course were more intensive than traditional courses. In addition, 19% agreed that the hybrid course work was less intensive than traditional courses.

Towards the end of the questionnaire, questions focused on the overall sentiments of students toward hybrid courses. Using a Likert-type scale, question 38 asked students the level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: Overall, I was satisfied with the hybrid course model. Fifty-one percent of respondents agreed with the
statement, and 16% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement. Conversely, 26% of students disagreed with the statement, and 7% strongly disagreed with the statement. Largely, 67% of respondents were satisfied with the hybrid model.

In addition, question 40 asked students if they would voluntarily elect to enroll in another hybrid course in the future. Using a similar Likert-type scale as question 38, students were asked for their level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: I would elect to enroll in another hybrid course in the future. Twenty-six percent of respondents agreed with the statement, and 32% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement. Conversely, 7% of students disagreed with the statement, and 19% strongly disagreed with the statement. Also, 16% of respondents remained neutral to the statement. Overall, 58% of respondents would elect to take another hybrid course in the future.

Student Expectations of Hybrid Courses

In order to assess the true nature of student perspectives on the effectiveness of hybrid courses, the researcher also surveyed respondents on their expectations of hybrid courses. Survey question 26 asked students to distinguish whether their expectations were different for hybrid courses than for traditional courses. Forty-four percent of students admitted to having different expectations for hybrid courses than for traditional courses. On the contrary, 56% of students did not have different expectations for hybrid courses than for traditional courses.
Similarly, question 33 asked students to consider the expectations of instructors for students enrolled in a hybrid course. Again, students were asked to consider their experience with both traditional courses and hybrid courses. Twenty-nine percent of students indicated that the instructor’s expectations of them in a hybrid course were lower than in a traditional course. Also, 13% of students suggested that their instructor’s expectations of them were higher in a hybrid course when compared to a traditional course. However, 58% of respondents expressed that expectations from their instructor were not different in either hybrid or traditional courses. Rather, a majority of students expressed that the expectations were about the same in a hybrid course as in a traditional course.

Survey question 27 addressed the difference in student expectations for hybrid courses and traditional courses. The researcher chose to collect responses for this question through a qualitative open-ended survey question. In compiling responses, the researcher noted themes in the student responses. Most of the responses expressed concerns in the areas of interaction and communication. One student responded by indicating, “I expect more interaction with the instructor, not less, which most often what I got from hybrid courses.” In addition, another student stated, “having more communication” with the instructor in a hybrid course. Some additional responses, that did not correlate to the researchers themes included: more resources if instructor is not going to be available, fewer presentations and more discussion boards, clearer expectations, and instructor competence in technology and course management.
Impact of Reduced Face Time on Learning Experience

To further understand student perspectives on the effectiveness of hybrid courses, the researcher elected to include questions regarding the student learning experience in hybrid courses. Given the reduced amount of face time in the classroom, questions accounted for experiences that would normally take place in a classroom setting and were replaced or improvised by formats integrated online. Thus, the researcher sought information on student learning experience.

*Student Interaction*

Survey question 21 considered the interaction of students that would occur in a face-to-face classroom. Respondents were asked to acknowledge the level of frequency in which students were provided with opportunities to collaborate. Students were asked to consider their experience with traditional courses when responding to the question. 11% of students indicated that hybrid courses allowed them to collaborate with other students more frequently than in traditional courses. Conversely, 50% of respondents felt that hybrid courses allowed them to collaborate with other students less frequently than traditional courses. However, 25% of students felt that there was no difference between hybrid and traditional, and they agreed that they were allowed to collaborate with other students about the same amount in both hybrid and traditional formats.

*Hybrid Learning Experience*

Survey question 22 asked students to consider their experience with hybrid courses. Respondents were asked to rate their ability to learn in hybrid courses. Twenty-
eight percent of students gave a rating of average for their ability to learn in a hybrid course. Forty-one percent of students gave ratings of their ability to learn in a hybrid course as above average, with 19% rating their ability to learn as excellent. Only 17% provided a rating of poor, for their ability to learn in a hybrid course. Moreover, 25% indicated their rating as below average for their ability to learn in a hybrid course.

**Instructor Performance**

The researcher also included information regarding instructor performance and feedback as part of the student learning experience. Thus, survey questions 31, 32, and 35 addressed these matters. Survey question 31 focused on the instructor’s ability to provide feedback in a hybrid course. Students were also asked to consider their experience with traditional courses when responding to the question. Twenty percent of respondents felt the instructor was able to provide feedback on assignments more frequently than average in hybrid course. Nineteen percent of respondents indicated that the instructor provided feedback about the same amount in a hybrid course as in a traditional course. However, 61% of students indicated that they received feedback slightly less frequently, if not significantly less frequently, in hybrid courses than in traditional courses.

In addition, students were asked about the quality of feedback that was provided by the instructor in a hybrid course. Respondents were also asked to take into consideration, and compare, their experience with traditional courses. Forty-five percent of students indicated that the quality of feedback in a hybrid course was either slightly
less helpful or less helpful. Coincidently, 45% of students also indicated that the quality of feedback in a hybrid course was about the same as a traditional course. Only 10% of students felt that the quality of feedback in a hybrid course was slightly more helpful when compared to a traditional course.

_Instructor Accessibility_

Survey question 35 addressed the availability or accessibility of the instructor in a hybrid course. Students were asked to compare their experience in a hybrid course with that of their experience in a traditional course. In addition, students who answered this question considered their most recent experience in a hybrid course. Forty-eight percent of respondents felt that their instructor in a hybrid course was available slightly less frequently, if not significantly less frequently. Forty-five percent of students indicated that the instructor in a hybrid course was accessible about the same as in a traditional course. Only 6% of students acknowledged that instructors in a hybrid course were available slightly more frequently, if not more frequently.

_Overall Experience_

Question 36 focused on the overall experience of students within hybrid courses. In addition, students were asked to considering their most recent hybrid course experience. Using a Likert-type scale, students were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: the overall learning experience in the course was effective. Forty-seven percent of respondents agreed that the overall learning experience in a hybrid course was effective. Thirteen percent of respondents strongly agreed that the overall
learning experience in a hybrid course was effective. Conversely, 20% of students disagreed that the overall learning experience was effective in a hybrid course. Seven percent of respondents strongly disagreed that the learning experience in a hybrid course was effective. Also, 13% of respondents were neutral in their response to the statement. Moreover, 60% of respondents felt that the overall learning experience in a hybrid course was effective.

Learning Management System

Survey question 37 concentrated on the learning management systems that were used to implement hybrid courses, such as SacCT, WebCT, Moodle, etc. Considering the learning management system that was used in their most recent hybrid course, students were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: the learning management system was used effectively. Fifty-two percent of respondents agreed that the learning management system was used effectively. Twenty-six percent of respondents strongly agreed that the learning management system was used effectively. Conversely, 13% of students disagreed that the learning management system was used effectively. Three percent of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. Also, 6% of respondents were neutral in their response to the statement. Overall, 78% of respondents felt that the learning management system was used effectively.

Hybrid Flexibility and Learning

Survey question 39 addressed the time flexibility of hybrid courses and the ability of students to learn. Respondents were asked to consider their most recent hybrid course
and agree or disagree with the following statement: the time flexibility yielded by the hybrid course improved my ability to learn. Thirteen percent of respondents agreed that the time flexibility yielded by the hybrid course improved their ability to learn. Forty-two percent of respondents strongly agreed with statement. Conversely, 13% of students disagreed that the time flexibility yielded by the hybrid course improved their ability to learn. Thirteen percent of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. In addition, 19% of respondents were neutral in their response to the statement. Moreover, 55% of students agreed that the time flexibility yielded by the hybrid course improved their ability to learn, while 26% strongly disagreed.

Summary

This chapter analyzed the data and discussed the findings that were collected from graduate students in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. The researcher categorized and presented findings as they related to the research questions pertaining to the characteristics of sample population, learning limitations, student needs, student expectations, and student learning experience. The data analysis revealed student perspectives on the effectiveness of hybrid education as it relates to student learning experience.
Chapter 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Considering the popularity and use of online courses, hybrid education has slowly emerged to forefront of modern technological teaching and learning practices. However, minimal research has been conducted to reflect the success or failure of hybrid courses, and there is a need to further investigate student perspectives on the effectiveness of hybrid courses within all areas of concentration in higher education. Thus, this study examined student perspectives on the effectiveness of hybrid courses in an educational leadership and policy studies graduate program. Using a mixed-methods design, this study used an electronic survey to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the learning limitations for students within a hybrid course?
2. How does a hybrid course meet the needs of the student?
3. What are the expectations of students within a hybrid course?
4. How does less face-to-face time affect the learning experience for students?

Understanding the findings of this research will facilitate better awareness of student perspectives on the effectiveness of hybrid education. As information technology continues to make a greater presence in education practices, there are growing populations of non-traditional students that are enrolling at institutions of higher education (York, 2008). Presented as a solution to the future of education, hybrid courses
have gained popularity for their flexibility and range of learning styles. However, their existence at modern day universities remains relatively new. As more and more colleges and universities adopt this method of learning, it becomes more important to examine and understand whether hybrid courses are effective models for student learning.

The literature that has been collected and compiled for this study was intended to develop a brief understanding of hybrid learning in higher education. It describes the differences in pedagogy, and the strengths and challenges to hybrid education. Access, communication, and the ability to meet the needs of non-traditional students are strong components of hybrid learning. Interaction, curriculum, instruction and leadership were identified as the challenges to hybrid learning. However, hybrid education has become a more favorable solution to online learning as it combines the modality of both traditional courses and online courses. Although limitations exist, it can offer a multitude of benefits to the business of the university, learning pedagogy, and to students with different learning styles. With the infusion of technology, hybrid education has many benefits for the emerging population of students seeking technologically enhanced learning. Hybrid education is the modernization of education.

The research for this study was conducted at Capitol State University (CSU), which is located in the northern region of the state of California. The sample for this study reflects 36 master’s degree students enrolled in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at CSU. Mixed-methods were used to collect information through the use of an anonymous electronic questionnaire that was administered through a website survey tool.
An electronic consent form was required prior to the participation of any student in the study. The research produced findings in the areas of population characteristics, learning limitations in hybrid courses, student needs in hybrid courses, student expectations of hybrid courses, and impact of reduced face time on learning experience. To analyze the findings, the researcher created a summary report of the results, and organized the results as they related to each of the research questions.

Conclusions

A majority of students enrolled in graduate courses, particularly in Higher Educational Leadership Studies, can be identified as non-traditional learners. As indicated by Table 1, 98% of students were under the age of 50, one-third were within an age range of 24-29, one third within an age range of 30-39, and less than one third within an age range of 40-49. In addition, Figure 1 shows that a majority of students enrolled in graduate courses identified themselves as having multiple roles and responsibilities during their enrollment. Eighty-nine percent of respondents held full-time employment positions while enrolled in full-time graduate programs. Seventy-two percent of students identified themselves as full-time graduate students. In addition, 61% of respondents are in a domestic relationship and 42% have children or dependents. Overall, the data supports the notion that the survey respondents are identified as non-traditional students, or otherwise adult learners.
The researcher also collected information on the graduate program selection process, the consideration for hybrid programs, and the participation in hybrid courses. Ninety-two percent of students considered evening programs when selecting graduate programs. However, only 22% of students considered selecting a hybrid graduate program. A majority of the students that were surveyed had never experienced a course in the hybrid format prior to enrolling in a CSU Educational Leadership and Policy studies program. Given the findings from the survey, students electing to enroll in graduate programs considered programs that provided for flexible schedules. The need for flexibility, combined with the demographic and characteristics of the populations, reveal that hybrid programs were not considered because of the lack of knowledge and experience with the format.

*Learning Limitations for Students within Hybrid Courses*

Technology has a strong presence in student experience and did not serve as a limitation in the hybrid model. The research has shown that contemporary students have substantial knowledge and experience with computers and learning management systems. Ninety-two percent of respondents had experience using a learning management system and 100% had moderate to high level of computer experience. Moreover, 89% of respondents were comfortable with the structure of hybrid courses.

Table 2 distinguishes the students’ level of importance for interaction in online courses and face-to-face courses. Seventy-two percent of respondents agreed that face-to-face interaction with the course instructor was very important. Thus, having less time
face-to-face time with the instructor is a limitation for students who indicate that it is important.

In comparing face-to-face courses and hybrid courses, student responses also indicated that more students were likely to not contribute anything more than the minimum in hybrid course discussion boards. However, a majority of students would be likely to contribute more than the minimum requirement in both hybrid and face-to-face courses. Lack of face-to-face time limits the interaction and productivity of students and their level of engagement

**Student Needs and Hybrid Courses**

In efforts to assess the learning characteristics, and as a result the needs of students, the researcher asked questions about learning style and how different course delivery formats meet student learning needs. According to the results represented in Table 4, most of the respondents rated visual learning as their best match for learning. Furthermore, Table 5 represents how well hybrid courses and traditional courses meet learning styles. One hundred percent of students agreed that face-to-face courses suited their learning style moderately well or better. A total of 81% of students agreed that hybrid courses suited their learning style moderately well or better. Overall, 75% of respondents felt that hybrid courses met their classroom needs.

In addition, students were asked to identify classroom needs that they felt were not met by hybrid courses, if any existed. The majority of responses expressed concerns in the areas of feedback, face-to-face interaction, and instructor communication. Rather,
hybrid courses did not meet most students’ needs in these three areas. One respondent indicated, “The instructor did not respond in a timely manner to email requests.” The same student compared his hybrid experience to his face-to-face experience, by suggesting, “In the classroom, they [instructors] have to answer your questions.” In addition, another student felt their experience in a hybrid course lacked face-to-face interaction and “the ability to connect with teacher and classmates.” Overall, 61% of students preferred traditional courses to hybrid courses. However, 39% of respondents preferred hybrid courses to traditional courses. Largely, 67% of respondents were satisfied with the hybrid model, and 58% of respondents would elect to take another hybrid course in the future.

Student Expectations of Hybrid Courses

In order to assess the true nature of student perspectives on the effectiveness of hybrid courses, the researcher also surveyed respondents with regards to their expectations of hybrid courses. Forty-four percent of students admitted to having different expectations for hybrid courses than for traditional courses. On the contrary, 56% of students did not have different expectations for hybrid courses than for traditional courses. Fifty-eight percent of respondents expressed that expectations from their instructor were not different in either hybrid or traditional courses. Rather, a majority of students expressed that the expectations were about the same in a hybrid course as in a traditional course.
However, some differences in student expectations for hybrid courses and traditional courses were evident. Most of the responses expressed concerns in the areas of interaction and communication. One student responded by indicating, “I expect more interaction with the instructor, not less, which is most often what I got from hybrid courses.” In addition, another student indicated, “having more communication” with the instructor in a hybrid course. Some additional responses, not correlated to the researchers themes included: more resources if instructor is not going to be available, fewer presentations and more discussion boards, clearer expectations, and instructor competency in technology and course management.

*Impact of Reduced Face Time on Learning Experience*

To further understand student perspectives on the effectiveness of hybrid courses, the student learning experience in hybrid courses must be taken into account. Given the reduced amount of face time in the classroom, questions accounted for experiences that would normally take place in a classroom setting, and they were replaced or improvised by formats integrated online. Fifty percent of respondents felt that hybrid courses allowed them to collaborate with other students less frequently than traditional courses. However, 88% of respondents agreed that they were able to learn in hybrid courses.

Information regarding instructor performance and feedback as part of the student learning experience was also addressed in the research. Sixty-one percent of students indicated that they received feedback slightly less frequently, if not significantly less frequently, in hybrid courses than in traditional courses. Forty-five percent of students
indicated that the quality of feedback in a hybrid course was either slightly less helpful or less helpful. Also, 48% of respondents felt that the instructor in a hybrid course was available slightly less frequently, if not significantly less frequently.

In conclusion, student perspectives on the effectiveness of hybrid education were positive. Although respondents identified some challenges facing hybrid education, the overall response was favorable. Sixty percent of respondents felt that the overall learning experience in a hybrid course was effective. In addition, 78% of respondents felt that the learning management system was used effectively. Also, 55% of students agreed that the time flexibility yielded by the hybrid course improved their ability to learn.

Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate that additional research is needed regarding student perspectives on hybrid education. Student perspectives are essential in building and refining hybrid education courses for the future. These perceptions can be used to improve the learning experience and pedagogy as the hybrid education model evolves. To ensure the improvement of hybrid models, this area must continually be examined. To better understand the effectiveness of hybrid education, it is recommended that more research be instated.

Research for this study was conducted with a sample population from a single department and concentration at one university. Thus, it is recommended that further research attempts consider and include various educational concentrations and different
institutions. Considerations should be given to community colleges, public universities, and private universities. The diversity of institutions and students will result in more accurate student learning needs for effective hybrid programming.

This research was solely concentrated from the perspective of graduate students enrolled in a hybrid program. Thus, it is recommended that future research should examine faculty perceptions on the effectiveness of hybrid education. Research should be conducted by collecting information from faculty with experience teaching in a hybrid course or program. This will also contribute to the effectiveness of hybrid education in the future.

Lastly, future research should consider longitudinal approaches to examining the effectiveness of hybrid education. Specifically, it is recommended that future research consider programs that are constructed as hybrid. Examining hybrid programs will allow for comprehensive data from students regarding the effectiveness of hybrid education. As students learn and understand the hybrid experience, they can provide important information on improvements to the model.
APPENDICES
From: Gabriel Hernandez  
Cc: Chavez, Jose L; Rosseau, Venesha  
Subject: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (EDLP): Student Survey  

Good Afternoon,  

As a graduate student in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (EDLP) at California State University, Sacramento (Sac State), you are being asked to participate in research related to EDLP. Your participation is entirely voluntary. The purpose of this study is to examine student perspectives on the effectiveness of hybrid education courses in EDLP at Sac State. This research is being conducted by Gabriel Hernandez in collaboration with Dr. Jose Chavez, EDLP faculty.

Please take a moment to review the attached Consent to Participate.

You may access the survey directly from the consent form or upon reviewing the form, you may follow this link: http://edu.surveygizmo.com/s3/810397/Hybrid-Education

Your attention and participation is greatly appreciated.

Best regards,

Gabe

Gabriel Hernandez

“Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known.” - Dr. Carl Sagan
APPENDIX B

Consent to Participate in Research

You are being asked to participate in research that will be conducted by Gabriel Hernandez, a graduate student in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (EDLP) at California State University, Sacramento (Sac State) in collaboration with Dr. Jose Chavez, EDLP faculty. The purpose of the study is to examine student perspectives on the effectiveness of hybrid education courses conducted in EDLP at Sac State.

You will be asked to complete an electronic questionnaire that will include items regarding your educational background, your preferred methods of learning, your experience with technology and your experience with hybrid courses. The responses that you provide will then be collected and analyzed.

This research is being conducted to benefit students at Sac State, and in other schools who may use the results. There may or may not be personal insight to be gained from the process; it is hoped that the results of the study will be beneficial for the future of hybrid courses in higher education.

To preserve the confidentiality of participants, no identifying information will be collected, such as name, address, social security number, etc. There are no risks associated with participating in this study, except those discussed below relating to completing an online questionnaire.

By completing this survey, you are agreeing to participate in this research. Your responses will be kept confidential to the degree permitted by the technology being used. However, no absolute guarantees can be given for the confidentiality of electronic data. Also, if you complete and submit the questionnaire anonymously, the researcher will be unable to remove anonymous data from the database should you wish to withdraw it.

You will receive no compensation for participating in this study. However, your contribution to the field of higher education is greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact Gabriel Hernandez at [redacted] or by e-mail at [redacted].

You may decline to participate in this study without any consequences. By clicking on the link provided and proceeding to complete this survey you are indicating you have read this page and consent to participate in the research. Begin Survey: http://edu.surveygizmo.com/s3/810397/Hybrid-Education
APPENDIX C

Electronic Survey

For the purpose of this questionnaire, the following terms are defined:

*Hybrid Course/Model* - A hybrid course is a blend of face-to-face instruction with online learning. In a hybrid course, part of the course learning is online and as a result, the amount of classroom seat-time is reduced.

*Traditional Course/Model* - A traditional course provides instruction to occur only face-to-face, in the classroom.

1. Please indicate your age:
   a. (open-ended)
   b. Rather not state

2. What is your gender:
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Prefer not to indicate

3. What is your marital status?
   a. Single
   b. Living as domestic partners
   c. Married
   d. Divorced
   e. Widowed

4. Do you have any children or dependants?
   a. Yes
   b. No
5. What is your student enrollment status?
   a. Part-time (enrolled in 6 units or less)
   b. Full-time (enrolled in more than 6 units)

6. What is your employment status?
   a. Part-time – 35 hours or less (including student assistants and internships)
   b. Full-time – 36 hours or more

7. In selecting a graduate program, what types of program schedules did you consider?
   a. Day-time programs only
   b. Evening programs only
   c. Schedule was not important when selecting a program

8. In selecting a graduate program, did you consider availability of hybrid courses?
   a. Yes
   b. No

9. Have you participated in a hybrid course prior to enrolling in your current program of study?
   a. Yes
   b. No

10. Approximately how many hybrid courses have you taken?
    a. (open-ended)
11. What is your level of experience using a learning management system (Such as SacCT, WebCT, Moodle, etc.)?
   a. High Level of Experience
   b. Moderate Level of Experience
   c. Some Experience
   d. No Experience

12. What is your level of experience using computers?
   a. High Level of Experience
   b. Moderate Level of Experience
   c. Some Experience
   d. Little Experience
   e. No Experience

13. How would you describe your level of comfort with the format of hybrid courses?
   a. Not very comfortable
   b. Somewhat comfortable
   c. Comfortable
   d. Very comfortable

14. Please rate the following learning styles according to how you learn best. (1 represents your BEST match for learning and 5 represents your LEAST match for learning.)*
   a. Visual Learner: 1 2 3 4 5
b. Auditory Learner: 1 2 3 4 5

c. Kinesthetic/Tactile Learner: 1 2 3 4 5

15. How well does a face-to-face course meet your learning style?
   a. Not well
   b. Moderately Well
   c. Well
   d. Very Well

16. How well does a hybrid (combined face-to-face and online) course meet your learning style?
   a. Not well
   b. Moderately Well
   c. Well
   d. Very Well

17. How important to you is interaction with the course instructor online and face-to-face?
   a. Online
      i. Not Important
      ii. Somewhat Important
      iii. Important
      iv. Very Important
   b. Face-to-Face
i. Not Important
ii. Somewhat Important
iii. Important
iv. Very Important

18. How important to you is interaction with other students online and face-to-face?
   a. Online
      i. Not Important
      ii. Somewhat Important
      iii. Important
      iv. Very Important
   b. Face-to-Face
      i. Not Important
      ii. Somewhat Important
      iii. Important
      iv. Very Important

19. How likely are you to contribute, more than the minimum requirement, to classroom discussions in a traditional face-to-face course (speak-out in-class)?
   a. Not very likely
   b. Somewhat Likely
   c. Likely
   d. Very likely
20. How likely are you to contribute, more than the minimum requirement, to discussion boards in a hybrid course?
   a. Not very likely
   b. Somewhat Likely
   c. Likely
   d. Very likely

21. Compared to a traditional course, hybrid courses allow you to collaborate with other students:
   a. Infrequently
   b. Less frequently
   c. About the same
   d. More Frequently
   e. Unsure/Insufficient experience

22. Based on your experience, how would you rate your ability to learn in a hybrid course:
   a. Poor
   b. Fair
   c. Average
   d. Very Good
   e. Excellent
   f. Unsure/Insufficient experience
23. Based on your experience, how well do hybrid courses meet your classroom needs?
   a. Not well at all
   b. Somewhat well
   c. Well
   d. Very Well

24. If any, what classroom needs were not met in a hybrid course?
   a. (open-ended)

25. Based on your experience with traditional and hybrid courses, which type of course do you prefer?
   a. Traditional (face-to-face)
   b. Hybrid (combined online & face-to-face)

26. Are your expectations for hybrid courses different than for traditional courses?
   a. Yes
   b. No

27. What expectations are different for hybrid courses than for traditional courses?
   a. (open-ended)

28. Do you have any additional comments regarding your learning ability, expectations, student needs or limitations within hybrid courses?
   a. (open-ended)
29. Have you ever been enrolled in a hybrid course? Or are currently enrolled in a hybrid course and have experienced both online and face-to-face components?
   a. Yes
   b. No

30. In your most recent hybrid course experience, in what program or course were you enrolled?
   a. (open-ended)

Based on your answer to the previous question, please answer the remaining questions.

31. Compared to a traditional course, the instructor in a hybrid course provided feedback on assignments:
   a. Less frequently
   b. Slightly less frequently
   c. About the same
   d. Slightly more frequently
   e. More Frequently

32. Compared to a traditional course, the quality of feedback in a hybrid course was:
   a. Less helpful
   b. Slightly less helpful
   c. About the same
   d. Slightly more helpful
   e. More helpful
33. Compared to a traditional course, how would you rate your instructor’s expectations of you in a hybrid course?
   a. Lower than traditional courses
   b. About the same as traditional courses
   c. Higher than traditional courses

34. Compared to a traditional (face-to-face) course, the workload in a hybrid course was (including but not limited to assignments, readings, projects and discussions):
   a. Less intensive
   b. Slightly less intensive
   c. About the same
   d. Slightly more intensive
   e. More intensive

35. Compared to a traditional course, the instructor in a hybrid course was available/accessible:
   a. Less frequently
   b. Slightly less frequently
   c. About the same
   d. Slightly more frequently
   e. More Frequently

36. In your most recent hybrid course, the overall learning experience in the course was effective.
a. Strongly Disagree
b. Disagree
c. Neither Agree nor Disagree
d. Agree
e. Strongly Agree
f. Not applicable

37. The learning management system (SacCt, WebCT, Moodle, etc.) was used effectively.
   a. Strongly Disagree
   b. Disagree
c. Neither Agree nor Disagree
d. Agree
e. Strongly Agree
f. Not applicable

38. Overall, I was satisfied with the hybrid course model.
   a. Strongly Disagree
   b. Disagree
c. Neither Agree nor Disagree
d. Agree
e. Strongly Agree
f. Not Applicable
39. The time flexibility yielded by the hybrid course improved my ability to learn.
   a. Strongly Disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Neither Agree nor Disagree
   d. Agree
   e. Strongly Agree
   f. Not Applicable

40. I would elect to enroll in another hybrid course in the future.
   a. Strongly Disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Neither Agree nor Disagree
   d. Agree
   e. Strongly Agree
   f. Not Applicable

Thank you for completing this survey. Your response is very important!
REFERENCES


Young, J. R. (2002). ‘Hybrid’ teaching seeks to end the divide between traditional and online instruction. The *Chronicle of Higher Education, 48*(28), A33-A34.