WP2 - 15.06.2015 - Project Report

Title: Blended learning in adult education: towards a definition of blended learning

Authors: Ruth Boelens[1*], Stijn Van Laer[2*], Bram De Wever[1], Jan Elen[2]

[1] Ghent University, Department of Educational Studies
[2] KU Leuven, Center for Instructional Psychology and Technology
[*] These authors contributed equally to this work

Blended learning is defined in different ways by several authors. Graham, Allen, and Ure (2005) mention three approaches: (a) blended learning as the combination of different instructional methods, (b) blended learning as the combination of different modalities or delivery media, or (c) blended learning as the combination of face-to-face instruction with computer-mediated instruction. Driscoll (2002) also offers similar points of view towards defining blended learning. She argues that four types of mixes can be described: (a) combining modes of web-based technology to accomplish an educational goal, (b) combining pedagogical approaches to produce an optimal learning outcome with or without instructional technology, (c) combining any form of instructional technology with face-to-face instructor-led training, and (d) combining instructional technology with actual job tasks (learning and working).

Of these definitions, perhaps the most common interpretation is the one about the blend of online and offline learning. Several authors describe blended learning as a combination or integration of the strengths of face-to-face instruction (e.g. live instruction and classroom interaction) and computer-mediated instruction or online teaching (e.g. technologically-mediated interactions between students, teachers and learning resources) (Bliuc, Goodyear, & Ellis, 2007; Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Graham, 2006; Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003; Watson, 2008).

How this blend has to occur, remains vague. Some authors describe the blend on the basis of percentages (e.g. Allen, Seaman, & Garrett, 2007; Bernard, Borokhovski, Schmid, Tamim, & Abrami, 2014). For example, according to Allen et al. (2007), in blended courses, between 30 and 79 percent of the content is delivered online. In contrast to this division made on the basis of a time frame, Garrison and Kanuka (2004) argue that the challenge is not measuring the time spent face-to-face or online, but the effective integration of the two main components in such a way that it is not "just adding on to the existing dominant approach or method (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004, p. 97)".

Our point of view: Oliver and Trigwell (2005) argue that the term blended learning remains unclear and ill-defined. It means different things to different people, which illustrates its widely untapped potential (Driscoll, 2002). Despite this, of the above described definitions,

iwt

perhaps the most common interpretation is the one about the blend of online and offline learning. Keeping these two assumptions in mind (ill-defined concept and mostly defined as the mix of on- and offline instruction), we chose to define the term blended learning as: "*learning that happens in an instructional context which is characterized by a deliberate combination of online and classroom-based interventions to instigate and support learning. Learning happening in purely online or purely classroom-based instructional settings is excluded*". The effective integration of both components depends on context factors such as learning goals, target group, size of the target group, and/or content.

References

Allen, I. E., Seaman, J., & Garrett, R. (2007). *Blending in: The extent and promise of blended education in the United States*. The Sloan Consortium. Retrieved from http://sloanconsortium.org/publications/survey/blended06

Bernard, R. M., Borokhovski, E., Schmid, R. F., Tamim, R. M., & Abrami, P. C. (2014). A meta-analysis of blended learning and technology use in higher education: from the general to the applied. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, *26*(1), 87–122. doi:10.1007/s12528-013-9077-3

Bliuc, A.-M., Goodyear, P., & Ellis, R. A. (2007). Research focus and methodological choices in studies into students' experiences of blended learning in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education*, *10*(4), 231–244. doi:10.1016/j.iheduc.2007.08.001

Driscoll, M. (2002). Blended learning: Let's get beyond the hype. *E-Learning*, *1*(4), 1–3. Retrieved from http://www-07.ibm.com/services/pdf/blended_learning.pdf

Garrison, D. R., & Kanuka, H. (2004). Blended learning: Uncovering its transformative potential in higher education. *Internet and Higher Education*, *7*(2), 95–105. doi:10.1016/j.iheduc.2004.02.001

Graham, C. R. (2006). Blended learning systems: Definition, current trends, and future directions. In C. J. Bonk & C. R. Graham (Eds.), *Handbook of blended learning Global perspectives local designs* (pp. 3–21). San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons. doi:10.2307/4022859

Graham, C. R., Allen, S., & Ure, D. (2005). Benefits and challenges of blended learning environments. *Encyclopedia of Information Science and Technology*, 253–259.

Oliver, M., & Trigwell, K. (2005). Can "Blended Learning" Be Redeemed? *E-Learning*, *2*(1), 17–26. doi:10.2304/elea.2005.2.1.2

Osguthorpe, R. T., & Graham, C. R. (2003). Blended Learning Environments: Definitions and Directions. *The Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, *4*(3), 227–233.

Watson, J. (2008). *Blended Learning: The Convergence of Online and Face-to-Face Education*. *Promising practices in online learning* (Vol. 572). North American Council for Online Learning. Retrieved from http://www.inacol.org/research/promisingpractices/NACOL_PP-BlendedLearning-lr.pdf