

Project 3: Integrating Blended Learning - Faculty Guide

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Introduction

This Faculty Guide will offer you and your institution guidance throughout the process of designing your Integrated Blended Learning course. The decision to offer any course should come from a well-implemented needs assessment that includes input and suggestions from all stakeholders, faculty, students, and administration. Once the determination for a specific topic has been chosen and the type of Blended Learning model has been deemed most appropriate (rotation, lab, flipped, individual) (Horn & Staker, 2015, p.47), instructional design can begin. Using a well-organized design approach, from concept to implementation and evaluation will improve the success of your new course. This process is comprised of five steps: analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation, which will give specific measures to be considered as you create and organize your Blended Learning course (Aldoobie, 2015).

Analyze

In the analysis phase of the instructional design process, all components that are necessary for a successful course must be considered. Once the course topic has been identified, specific goals need to be developed. When considering educational goals for students, specific content analysis (learning objectives) must be created. Because a blended course incorporates face-to-face learning, and heavy reliance on technology during online learning, a technical analysis, structural analysis and an analysis of the online environment, must be examined (Durak & Ataizi, 2016).

The in-depth analysis of learners' characteristics is essential in order to understand what skills and knowledge they possess. Will students come with prior knowledge? Are they expected

to have an understanding of certain content? This information allows for appropriate learning objectives to be developed which will support and/or challenge students as they go through the course. This data can be gathered from previous course evaluations, online surveys, grades on previous exams and informal interviews (Garrett, 2013).

Considering that technology is an integral part of a blended course, the additional analysis of technical equipment must be examined. Learners access to a personal computer, the internet, a camera, microphone, and headphones must be analyzed. Since the course will have an online component, a structural analysis will be needed to be designed to incorporate synchronous vs. asynchronous learning. Lastly, an analysis of the Online Environment, specifically an appropriate Learning Management System (LMS), must be researched in order to have seamless learning occur whether face-to-face or online (Durak & Ataizi, 2016).

The analysis phase of the instructional design process sets specific goals for the course that are based on an understanding of the skills and knowledge of the learners. Since technology is an integral part of the Blended Learning course, analysis of all aspects of technology that will be used need to be evaluated.

Design

Administrators and teachers must collaborate when constructing measurable learning objectives for each course. It is imperative for the learning objectives to align with the online and digital tools, content, activities, and assessments. This process must be conducted in a systematic fashion in order to identify a specific design which will aid the development of the blended course environment (Garrett, 2013).

When creating learning objectives, administrators and teachers need to determine what students are expected to learn or achieve by completing the various course components. In order to evaluate the success of the learners and the course design, measurable and specific objectives must be constructed. As described by the Teaching Commons at DePaul University (2018), measurable learning objectives include “a verb that describes an observable action, a description of the conditions under which the action takes place, and the acceptable performance level” (para. 6). This information will provide learners with an understanding of what will be expected of them in the course and within individual learning modules of the course.

The action verbs used in the learning objectives will guide the course designer to develop and choose the appropriate online content, activities, and assessments. For example, if a determined learning objective states that students will exhibit creative writing skills in a specific discipline, the online or digital component of the course will provide the learners with the capability and opportunity to exercise creative writing. Content, activities, and assessments should align with the learning objective.

Bloom’s Taxonomy, a taxonomy created by Benjamin Bloom, provides a tiered approach for determining if learning is taking place at various levels (“Measurable Verbs to Express Bloom’s Taxonomy,” n.d.). Appropriate action verbs are associated with the six levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy: Knowing, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating and Creating. The appropriate action verbs can be referenced at the following website:

<http://www.marshall.edu/assessment/Resources/BloomsTaxonomyVerbs.pdf> . Action verbs which are not measurable and should not be included in learning objectives include: appreciate,

believe, hear/listen, realize, recognize, comprehend know, see, think, experience, perceive, understand, feel and memorize (“Measurable Verbs to Express Bloom’s Taxonomy,” n.d.).

Develop

Prior to developing course components, one needs to identify which model they will be utilizing. Selecting a blended learning program that is student-centered and suitable for all learners is essential. Horn and Staker (2015) discussed four blended learning models: Rotation model, Flex model, A La Carte model and Enriched Virtual model.

The Rotation model allows for students to rotate from one station or center to the next. One or more stations must be technology-based. The rotation model is a student-led learning environment where teachers serve as facilitators. In a flipped classroom, students complete online lessons in an environment other than their classrooms. Flipped classrooms are appropriate when all students have equitable access to internet and technology at home. The Flex model resembles a full-time online learning course where students are required to complete most of the work online and at their own pace. The A La Carte model differs from the Flex model because students have an option to take some courses A La Carte and face-to-face at a brick-and-mortar campus. The fourth model - Enriched Virtual, students are required to meet with the instructor (in-person) five days a week. Students have the option of completing the assignments at school or at another location. (Horn & Staker, 2015).

After selecting a model, teachers should plan to incorporate project-based learning. Project-based learning allows for students to utilize their critical thinking skills as they have in-depth discussions with their peers while working collaboratively on given tasks. Project-based

learning allows students to attain a more profound understanding of the subject matter. “Pairing online learning with project-based learning helps students demonstrate that they can apply their knowledge and connect their understanding across disciplines” (Horn and Staker, 2015).

Students should have ample opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of the content. Formative and summative assessments should be purposeful and varied. Assessments should include projects, digital portfolios, discussions via Google Classrooms or other platforms such as *nowcomment.com*. Teachers can also try Backchannel Chat, which can be compared to a “teacher-moderated, private version of Twitter” (Knutson, 2018). These platforms will assist with promoting student engagement and can be utilized as a form of assessment. The teacher can read students’ discussions and provide them with timely feedback while getting a sense of which students may need additional support with understanding the skills or concepts that are being taught. Teachers should allow students to demonstrate their understanding of the content in various ways. Students should be able to demonstrate their knowledge in verbal, written or digital form. Digital portfolios, blogs, videos, podcasts, and audio casts should be some of the options provided to all learners.

Implement

In the implementation stage, an array of course materials, such as standard textbooks, e-course books, Coursepacks (teacher-selected readings either in print or digital form), or Open Education Resources (freely accessible digital resources for learning, teaching, and researching), that educators will utilize during the course can be chosen depending on instructional goals. Teachers should be properly trained to use new digital products and/or systems before

introducing them to students. Teachers can arrange their classrooms for class/group instruction. It is helpful when students are given a sufficient range of mobility in the classroom. “Students’ positive experiences in the multimodal learning environment and seamless interaction across tools and spaces allowed them to engage in collaborative work inside and outside the classroom...the physical and digital tools were found to be integral and supportive” (Ioannou et al., 2015). With appropriate logistics, pupils will be able to rotate throughout the class to engage in a variety of activities and assignments.

From their coursework, learners can be assigned games (memory games matching vocabulary and definitions, story quilts, math facts races, or grammar tic, tac, toe) to measure what was learned. Students can also be assigned multimedia activities to reinforce concepts from lessons. Students can compose chapter summaries on an Edublog to encourage reflection and collaboration with other students, communicate with Recap, a teacher-moderated response and reflect application, or access Quizlet to engage in specific content activities. Additionally, personalized learning activities from e-course book digital products can be assigned as well.

Teachers can also consider using *CommonLit*. *CommonLit* is a free digital library of leveled text. The teacher can filter collections by grade level, lexile level, theme, genre, literary device, and even Common Core State Standards. Every passage includes footnotes with vocabulary words and essential background information. An adaptive-technology-type toolbar for online reading includes a dictionary, a highlighter, text-to-speech functionality, and translation features for 13 languages (Encarnacion, 2018). Additionally, passages can also be printed out for students via PDF. This provides for student choice. Some students may work better with online tools, while some may need the paper-based copy first, then can slowly

transition to the online format. *CommonLit* provides teachers with specific data in reading and writing where they can easily identify students individual progress as well as the class as a whole.

To gauge student attainment, formative assessments, which are paper-based/online diagnostics given to test student knowledge during a lesson or unit, will help teachers in determining appropriate instruction or necessary intervention. They can be completed individually or in groups with an opportunity for students to receive constructive feedback from their instructors. Some examples would be weekly quizzes, homework assignments, and in-class discussions. Google Forms, Kahoot, and Quizizz are some of the online assessments available, in addition to quizzes created on an LMS. Teachers can also utilize the LMS for summative assessments, which are evaluations that students take at the end of a lesson, chapter, or unit. Midterm and final exams, presentations, final projects, or standardized tests are some examples of evaluations that would be weighted more in the grading process.

Evaluate

Evaluation of the design and the integration of educational technologies into blended learning are important throughout the entire process. Gathering input from all stakeholders at each part of the process will guarantee a system that is constantly and consistently updated which can improve learner satisfaction (Durak & Ataizi, 2016). When evaluating the effectiveness of blended learning environments, it is important to measure the impact of the course content format, interaction between students and instructors and instances of collaboration (El-ghalayini & El-khalili, 2012, p. 428). Student data received from the utilized content, activities and

assessments, as mentioned in the “Develop” stage, must be analyzed and compared with the learning objectives in the “Design” stage in order to measure the effectiveness of the implementation.

Additional components can be taken into consideration when evaluating blended learning. When evaluating a blended learning course, one should specifically identify what part(s) of the course (if not all) they would like to assess. Knowing the exact purpose of the evaluation, whether it is to improve student engagement or to measure the quality of course material is critical. As Bowyer (2017) indicated, measuring course outcomes, learner satisfaction and student engagement are critical pieces that one should assess during the evaluation stages. Course outcomes include but are not limited to: student attendance, grades, student growth and task completion.

While course outcomes provide insightful data, it cannot measure learner satisfaction. At times, teachers may conclude that their blended learning course was successful since many students met or exceeded expectations. However, teachers must also take learner satisfaction into consideration “because it accounts for students’ personal experiences of the course” (Bowyer, 2017). Measuring student engagement is an essential component as well as it allows for a more intricate examination of students’ overall experiences, motivation, knowledge and understanding of the content.

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