

BLENDING LEARNING AS A WAY TO DIVERSIFY THE TRADITIONAL SYSTEM OF LEARNING

The approach to modern education has altered greatly. The first decade of the 21st century has brought more changes into education than the hundreds of years before. All these changes have been caused by the global computerization and digitalization of our life. Rapid developments of IT technologies can not but have a deep impact on the process of learning and teaching. Information technologies create the unlimited amount of opportunities that intensify the teaching / learning process and make it more diverse.

One of the newest developments in the sphere of education is connected with blended learning. The first attempts to integrate computer and Internet technologies into learning were made in the late 1990s when the on-line learning courses were developed by EPIC Learning (USA). The term “blended learning” is rather new. Norm Friesen in his report “Defining Blended Learning” says that “blended learning designates the range of possibilities presented by combining Internet and digital media with established classroom forms that require the physical co-presence of a teacher and students” [1]. Massachusetts Institute of Technology defines it as “structured opportunities to learn, which use more than one learning or training method, inside or outside the classroom” [2]. Graham defined ‘blended learning systems’ as the ones that ‘combine face-to-face instruction with computer mediated instruction’ [3, p.5]. Clark defines blended learning as the combination of two or more distinct methods of training. These combinations may presuppose a great number of combinations: the blending of classroom instruction with online instruction, or blending online instruction with the access to a coach or faculty member, or blending simulations with structured courses, or blending on-the-job training with brownbag informal sessions, or even blending managerial coaching with e-learning activities [4].

Along with the term “blended learning” we can encounter the terms “hybrid learning”, “technology-mediated instruction”, “web-enhanced instruction”, and “mixed-mode instruction”. It should be noted that they are often used interchangeably in research literature [5, p. 18–23].

Generally, blended learning can be considered as an additional element to the classroom activities and the one that supports existing teaching practices. Using a blended learning approach means that teachers can access online content directly from their classrooms but integrate it so that it forms a cohesive part of a lesson or syllabus, rather than existing separately from what they are teaching.

What are the basic features of blended learning? Having analysed a number of works devoted to blended learning techniques, it is possible to conclude that it is characterized by a number of features:

1. The blended classroom has the ability to combine two different settings for learning and instruction. The blended learning model implements instruction that takes place both offline in the traditional face-to-face classroom and online that usually occurs through the use of the internet.
2. The blended classroom is a flexible learning environment where the amount of time spent online versus traditional instruction is dependent on the nature of the instruction, the individual needs of the students, and the preference of the instructor.
3. The blended classroom uses both structured and unstructured learning. A blended curriculum incorporates both types of learning.
4. The blended classroom encourages students to take significant ownership of many of their learning experiences. The freedom to interact and collaborate with peers, without teacher intervention, is highly motivating for some students.
5. The blended classroom creates a structured core curriculum of learning activities that are taught through a variety of instructional methods.
6. The blended classroom supports an environment where students start on small tasks and work their way into more complex projects.

7. The blended classroom provides technical support for students and meets them where they are.
8. The blended classroom provides an easy-to-use learning environment that encourages student-directed learning.
9. The blended classroom is an interactive, innovative learning environment where each student utilizes a variety of learning resources and settings to become engaged, invested and motivated to find academic and personal success.

In order to be successful, blended learning instruction should be kept coherent and unified. It combines many of the best elements of face-to-face teaching (personalized learning, social interaction and direct contact with the language) while allowing greater variety and flexibility than a traditional classroom set up, responding to the needs of the modern learner. If properly organized, it will promote critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity of the students.

Список використаної літератури

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