01. Scope

Blended Learning

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During the past decades, the advent of Web 2.0 technologies have invaded the educational domain. Digital learning technologies proliferated giving way to an increasing number of new learning formats. The most prominent of these formats are: Fully online learning which refers to learning that happens exclusively online from 0-100. The most prominent example of this type is Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).

Remote classroom learning is a term which refers to the functionality of courses that would normally take place on campus but are now conducted remotely using a variety of online tools. This format became widely disseminated during corona times for its capacity to provide a relatively easy alternative to in-class sessions.

Hybrid learning refers to cases where an in-class session with on-campus students is also simultaneously transmitted online to students attending the class from other locations as well.

And finally, Blended learning. At course level it's a term that describes the combination of traditional face-to-face classroom experience with new innovative technology. The ratio of face-to-face to online environments can fluctuate depending on the contexts and the learning objectives. In qualitative terms, however, blending refers to the cases where *instructor and learners are working together in mixed delivery modes, to accomplish learning outcomes that are pedagogically supported and which bridge course environments in a manner meaningful to the learner.*

Blended Learning

Blended learning is as much about pedagogy as it is about technology: on the one hand, it promotes the use of tools that simply enable or even enhance online exchange. Nevertheless, blending can also significantly increase student agency and collaboration between peers and tutors alike. Based on that observation, three types of blending have been identified thus far: the enabling blend, the enhancing blend and the most radical one of all, the transformative blend.

In the first case, the role of technology is that of simply enabling online access to existing resources. Think of a lecture that has been recorded and uploaded on Brightspace. Accommodating lecturing content online, allows students to re-watch lectures at their own pace and time and for as many times as they wish. This requires very little effort on behalf of the tutors, but it is still a valuable contribution in terms of knowledge delivery.

In the second case, the enhancing blend, technology allows for more resources to be included online. Think of an additional number

of YouTube videos or past recorded lectures being added on Brightspace besides the in-class lecture recordings. Apart from content, quizzes, asynchronous or synchronous discussions and possibly games may also enhance learning online. Same for, opportunities for peer feedback as well as teacher feedback: these types of online exchange can significantly contribute to this type of blending.

In the third case, however, the transformative blend, blending becomes more interventionist: the course content and the course activities are split between the in-class and the online environment. This in turn requires a complete restructuring of the course and the radical reconsideration of pedagogy. Because in this case, although the two learning environments work synergistically, what takes place online does not mirror or supplement what happens in class. The online environment becomes an autonomous space that in turn conditions the in-class exchange. As a natural consequence, in transformative blends, student agency is increased, and the role of tutors becomes less instructive. Tutors are more likely to facilitate students to navigate the two distinct learning environments.

Reflecting on Blended Learning

In blended learning, face to face time is particularly important. The idea is not to reduce teacher student time, but to enhance its quality and make better use of the available resources. Blended learning is about leveraging digital content to provide students with knowledge, spend the time with students for deeper levels of discussion and help them develop higher order thinking skills. Feedback and reflection can be more individual and immediate in a blended course.

Blended learning feeds all four pillars of learning: Attention, Active engagement, Feedback, and Consolidation. And therefore, blending pedagogy is considered key for this module too. For the present platform, "Circularity for Educators," all content in the form of videos has been produced with Creative Commons licences. These allow you to freely embed the videos directly into your own courses at your discretion. Circularity for Educators also accommodates additional open educational resources. After every video that we share, another page informs you of additional teaching and learning material. In fact, the design of the platform itself is meant to be used by you as a prototype so you can see how you can build your course by blending the open educational resources that are available here and match your scope.