



METHODOLOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS: BLENDED LEARNING FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR HEI PEDAGOGICAL STAFF

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Abstract

This article addresses the organization of foreign language instruction within professional development courses through the implementation of a blended learning model. The concept of “blended learning” is defined based on an analysis of scholarly research in the field. A comprehensive overview of information and communication technologies (ICT) used in blended learning is provided, focusing on their didactic properties and functions that enhance the effective and purposeful execution of educational tasks. The article outlines an algorithm for developing a blended learning model for foreign language instruction and identifies the key principles for structuring educational content, along with methodological guidelines for organizing the learning process in a blended format.

Keywords: Blended learning, professional development, Higher Education Institution, information and communication technology, supportive blended learning model, blended learning substitution model, model of an e-learning consulting centre, multimedia, Learning Management System.

Introduction

The ever-growing volume of information required for acquiring a high-quality professional education necessitates the adoption of innovative educational approaches. These approaches should facilitate the transmission of a substantial amount of knowledge to learners within a relatively short time frame, ensure a high level of comprehension, and promote the practical application of acquired knowledge.

The advancement of modern information and communication technologies (ICT) has enabled the creation and implementation of educational programs at a



qualitatively superior level. These technologies contribute to shaping a computer-literate individual, capable of thriving in an information-rich society [13].

Achieving a new and relevant standard of education calls for the integration of modern pedagogical approaches within educational institutions, the evolution of a flexible and non-dogmatic system of education, and the construction of a lifelong learning framework. Blended learning plays a crucial role in this process, offering a comfortable and well-structured educational information environment. It also provides an effective communication system for sharing all pertinent educational content.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An examination of academic, educational, and pedagogical literature, along with materials from various conferences and seminars, reveals a lack of unified interpretation regarding the concept and content of "blended learning." Often referred to as "integrated," "combined," or "hybrid" learning, the term lacks a universally accepted definition. Most definitions are descriptive and vary depending on the context in which the term is used. Roger Schank, cited by Donald Clark in his article "*Blended Learning*", defines it as a combination of e-learning and face-to-face instruction [1].

Among Russian scholars, two predominant interpretations emerge. The first interprets blended learning as "a method where face-to-face sessions using active learning methods are embedded within a distance learning course" [2]. In this model, the main instructional content is delivered online, emphasizing learner autonomy, while face-to-face sessions serve to reinforce and deepen understanding through active methods.

The second approach, promoted by Yu.I. Kapustin, defines blended learning as "a model utilizing distributed educational resources in traditional instruction with both asynchronous and synchronous distance learning elements" [3]. Both approaches share a foundational principle: a combination of face-to-face and distance education components, varying in proportion according to instructional design.

Building on these perspectives, we propose the following definition: *Blended learning is a fusion of traditional and digital educational modalities, in which either component may serve as the foundation depending on the chosen*



instructional model. This definition captures the core attributes and flexible configurations of blended learning.

The modern educational process is inseparable from the integration of evolving ICT tools. However, the use of ICT in education must be pedagogically grounded – educators must understand the properties and functions of each tool to align them with specific didactic tasks and subject-specific requirements.

Researchers such as E.S. Polat, S.V. Titova, P. Sharma, and B. Barrett identify two fundamental functions of ICT – Informational and communicative – which manifest across all stages of the educational process.

Below is a list of ICT tools commonly employed in blended learning, along with brief descriptions of each:

1. Email

A form of asynchronous communication, used for interaction between trainers and learners, distribution of materials (texts, graphics, audio, and video), and facilitating peer communication.

2. Multimedia Tools

Interactive tools that integrate static images, video, animation, text, and audio. Widely applied in all phases of instruction to present content, develop skills, evaluate learning outcomes, manage the learning process, and support individual or group work.

3. Presentation Software

Tools such as Microsoft PowerPoint or Prezi (a cloud-based alternative), allow for the creation of structured, linear or non-linear presentations, often used for idea visualization, brainstorming, and information delivery.

4. Internet Forums

Asynchronous platforms that facilitate thematic discussions among learners and instructors. Forums are integral to Learning Management Systems (LMS), underscoring their educational value.



5. Chat Services

Real-time communication tools (text, voice, video) used for immediate interaction and collaborative learning.

6. Videoconferencing

A real-time communication service enabling audio and video exchange among geographically dispersed participants. Effective for meetings, discussions, and collaborative activities.

7. Learning Management Systems (LMS)

Platforms for creating, managing, and delivering digital course materials. Popular LMS include Moodle, ILIAS, aTutor, and Blackboard. Features vary based on training format, instructional goals, and instructor preferences.

8. Social Services

Virtual platforms for community engagement and collaborative learning, enabling communication, information sharing, and joint activity organization.

9. Wiki Technologies

Web 2.0-based asynchronous tools that allow users to collaboratively edit content. Useful for developing research, writing, and knowledge-sharing skills.

10. Blogs

Personal or public online journals displaying posts in reverse chronological order. Blogs serve as individual learning spaces, platforms for discussion, administrative tools, and online publication venues [6,7].

MATERIAL AND METHODS

An analysis of practical experiences and literature (by authors such as M.G. Yevdokimova, Yu.I. Kapustin, M.N. Mokhova, A.L. Nazarenko, M.A. Tatarinova, S.V. Titova, I.E. Allen, B. Barrett, J. Bersin, C.J. Bonk, D. Clark, R. Dziuban, and R. Garrett) led to the development of a general classification of blended learning models based on the following criteria:

1. Modification of traditional course format;
2. Alteration of curriculum content;
3. Reallocation of time between face-to-face learning, independent study, and monitoring activities.

From these criteria, three primary blended learning models for professional development courses were identified:

1. Supportive Blended Learning Model

This model integrates a distance learning component to supplement face-to-face instruction. While in-person hours remain, additional material is introduced via online modules, thereby expanding the scope of independent study. Feedback mechanisms enhance the trainer's ability to monitor individual progress.

2. Substitution Model

This model embodies the true essence of blended learning. Educational content is divided between face-to-face and online formats, with the ratio typically ranging from 30% to 70%. Classroom sessions focus on activities requiring real-time interaction, e.g., discussions, simulations, and project work—while digital components support independent study and continuous assessment.

3. E-Learning Consulting Center Model

Here, traditional instruction is transformed into consultation-based sessions either group or individual held in computer labs. The instructor assumes the role of facilitator or consultant, emphasizing learner autonomy and coordination over direct knowledge transfer.

The development or transformation of training courses into blended formats should adhere to established didactic principles, psychological considerations, and the practical realities of the educational context. The design process generally follows five key stages:

STAGES OF IMPLEMENTING A BLENDED LEARNING MODEL

1. Analysis Stage

- Examination of the socio-political context and specific objectives of using blended learning in language education and professional development.

- Assessment of learner characteristics, including age, background knowledge, motivation, and ICT proficiency. Recommended tools include diagnostic tests, interviews, and questionnaires [9,12].
- Evaluation of the educational environment, including available ICT resources and staff readiness for technological integration.

2. Planning Stage

- Definition of overall course goals and specific learning outcomes.
- Selection of an appropriate blended learning model based on earlier analysis. For instance, choosing the substitution model requires careful planning of the interaction between online and offline learning components [2,10].

3. Development Stage

This intensive phase includes:

- Designing course content (themes, lexical and grammatical structures, cultural material).
- Selecting instructional methods, formats, and tasks.
- Identifying appropriate ICT tools aligned with pedagogical goals and technical capacity.
- Dividing content between online and face-to-face elements.
- Developing formative, summative, and self-assessment tools.
- Establishing metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of the blended learning model.

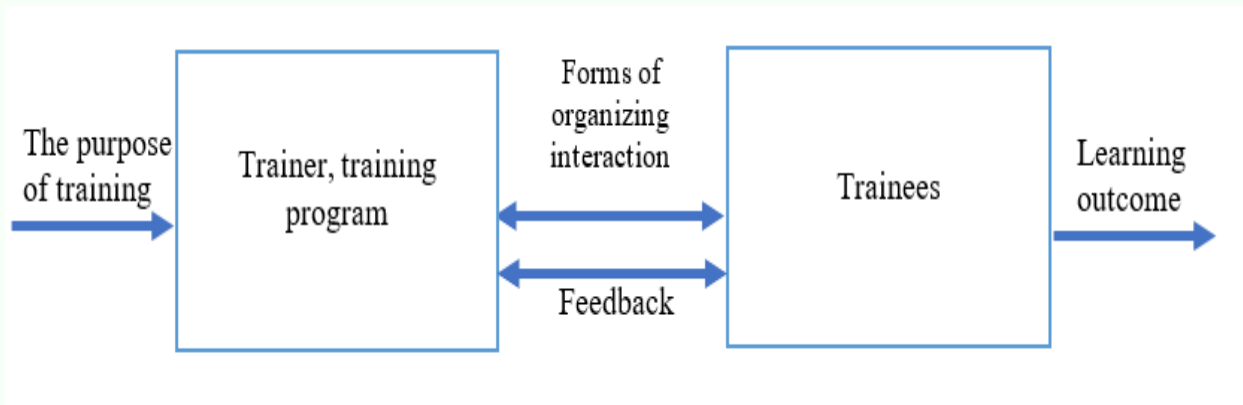
4. Implementation Stage

The developed model is integrated into the educational process. Key actions include updating course content, maintaining feedback loops, encouraging interaction, and addressing challenges as they arise.

5. Evaluation Stage

Ongoing assessment of the model's effectiveness allows for iterative improvements. Evaluation should inform the revision of earlier stages, rendering the model dynamic and cyclical rather than linear.

The complete blended learning process can be visualized as a continuous model (see Figure 1):



Though the evaluation stage concludes the outlined sequence, it marks the beginning of a new design cycle, ensuring the ongoing refinement of the blended learning strategy [11].

CONCLUSION

The key distinctions between the blended learning model and traditional instruction include the tailored selection of instructional design based on educational objectives, the integration of ICT tools, and the strategic distribution of educational content and activities across face-to-face and online components.

These principles are foundational to the design or revision of any professional development course utilizing blended learning. A thoughtful and context-sensitive approach to these components ensures that the educational process is both effective and adaptable to the evolving needs of learners and institutions.

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