



Chapter 4

Cooperative Learning as a Blended Learning Strategy: A Conceptual Overview

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ABSTRACT

There is currently a movement in education institutions towards blended learning (BL). The integration of technology in the classroom is likely to be the defining transformative innovation for education in the 21st century. As BL is used more extensively in K–12 schools, educators must develop specialized skills for teaching in blended environments. For the purpose of this study, Cooperative learning (CL) is proposed as a BL strategy. CL is an approach that involves a small group of students working together as a team to solve a problem, complete a task, or accomplish a common goal. The combined blended learning model was developed from a synthesis of BL design models and can be used as a design tool when creating a cooperative-blended learning environment.

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INTRODUCTION

There is currently a movement in education institutions towards blended learning (BL) (Geçer, 2013). BL is a learning environment that combines the advantages offered by internet-based, computer-assisted learning and face-to-face learning (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). Information and communication technologies (ICT) is likely to be the defining transformative innovation for education in the 21st century (López-Pérez et al., 2011).

However, using new technologies does not necessarily improve the standard of courses. Transformation and redesigning of courses for the online environment is vital to ensure that the benefits of on-line learning are fully exploited (Williams, 2010). Courses need to be redesigned and redeveloped with reference to pedagogical theories (Kort & Reilly, 2002). The revolution of ICT is a major challenge for the professional development of educators. Not only do they have to familiarise themselves with ICT, but they also need to acquire the necessary pedagogical expertise that is needed for effectively working in new technology-based learning environments (Vrtič & Pšunder, 2009). Educators should be familiar with a variety of teaching strategies in order to choose the appropriate one(s) for a specific group of students (Wang, 2009). According to Pulham & Graham (2018) BL instruction is expanding at the K-12 level. As BL is used more extensively in K-12 schools, educators must develop specialized skills for teaching in blended environments (Graham, Borup, Pulham, & Larsen, 2019). In BL environments teaching strategies should be adapted to the new opportunities offered by the use of technology rather than adapting the technologies to fit the educator's current and traditional teaching strategies (Ander-ton, 2006). The combination of face-to-face instruction and online technologies in a BL situation create endless educational potential that reflect its pedagogical richness (Mortera-Gutiérrez, 2006). The aim of this chapter is to propose the combined blended learning model as a design instrument to incorporate cooperative learning (CL) as an effective teaching strategy in blended learning (BL) environments in K-12 classrooms. This paper forms part of a larger PhD study (Bosch, 2017) that took place in the context of higher education. However, similar challenges to those of higher education are experienced in K-12 (Burden, 2016; Capar & Tarin, 2015; Casey & Goodyear, 2015; Hung et al., 2018; Van Ryzin et al, 2018).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The needs of students are the basis for learning, with greater emphasis on the learning process than the learning outcome (Armstrong & College, 2010). When planning learning experiences, the educator needs to assist students in identifying their learning needs and taking responsibility for their own learning (Murad & Varkey, 2008). There are a number of teaching strategies that can allow students to become self-directed in their learning by setting their own goals and making plans to reach them, completing learning activities, monitoring their own learning processes and evaluating their own results (Francom 2009). Cooperative learning (CL) is one of the teaching-learning strategies that empower students to develop to their fullest potential through the interaction, support and confidence they gain (Oswalt, 2003; Merriam et al., 2007; Regan, 2003). CL is an approach that involves a small group of students working together as a team to solve a problem, complete a task or accomplish a common goal (Wessner & Pfister, 2000). CL as a teaching strategy for K-12 education is well researched and the success of this teaching strategy has been established in a number of studies (Burden, 2016; Capar & Tarin, 2015; Casey & Goodyear, 2015; Hung *et al.*, 2018; Van Ryzin *et al.*, 2018). According to a literature review done by

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