

## ARTICLE-BLENDED AND INTEGRATED LEARNING

### Blended and Integrated Learning: Learning Models, Tips and Benefits

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#### Introduction

Blended and integrated learning, constitute contemporary terms that reflect the developments of the learning process. The term blended learning is related to the means that are used in order to fulfil the learning process, while the term integrated learning to the particular knowledge that is delivered. In this article, we are going to present the terms in more details, provide some tips for adopting them in the training and present the benefits of using them.

#### Blended Learning

Blended learning is an approach to training that goes beyond the traditional means of teaching and blends them with technological means, such as eLearning and mobile learning. The research definition of blended learning, a blend of digital/online/technology-based modalities and activities and in-person/face-to-face/offline modalities and activities, is the one that most respondents agreed with<sup>1</sup>.

According to the available bibliography there are several blended learning models one can adopt to the training session<sup>2</sup>. The different models agree with the general definition of the term, meaning that the differences are basically related to the way one will blend technology in the training. For example, gamification is the process when the instructor provides online educational games to the students in order to increase competition and motivate them, while the online lab blended learning model is related to the provision of educational material available through phones, tablets, and laptops.

Developing a blended learning program can be challenging for the instructor. The process to be followed for the creation of effective blended learning programs could be summarized in three main steps:

- a) define objectives, not only will this create clarity for your learners, but it enables the instructor to build a more focused program that gives learners the skills and knowledge they need.
- b) make it interactive, the instructor has to decide the amount of learning that will be through online training and how much will take place through self-paced learning.
- c) assessments, the instructor needs to monitor and assess the learners' progress at the end of the program, to collect insights into how successful the training was, and if there are any knowledge gaps that need to be addressed.

Going beyond a solely classroom or screen training session can provide some concrete benefits<sup>3</sup>, such as:

- ✓ Accounting for everyone
- ✓ Learning Trends and Feedback

<sup>1</sup> Watson, J., -. Blending Learning: The Convergence of Online and Face-to-Face Education. [online] North American Council for Online Learning. Available at: <<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED509636.pdf>>; [Accessed 27/9/2022]

<sup>2</sup> ELM Learning, 2022. What is Blended Learning? A Guide to Everything You Need to Know. [online] ELM Learning. Available at: <<https://elmlearning.com/blog/blended-learning-everything-need-know/>> [Accessed 27/9/2022]

<sup>3</sup> Rowan, A., 2019. 6 Advantages Of Using Blended Learning In Your Organisation. [online] eLearning Industry. Available at: <<https://elearningindustry.com/blended-learning-organisation-6-advantages-using/>>; [Accessed 27/9/2022]



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- ✓ Lower Costs
- ✓ Fun and Engagement
- ✓ Reach and personalization

### Integrated Learning

Integrated learning is particularly related to the curriculum of the training, and describes the method and practice of cross-disciplinary thinking and connection-making<sup>4</sup>. The integrated curriculum is about making significant connections between subjects or skills that are usually addressing several different subject areas. Integrating the curriculum can improve learning experiences and aims on making connections among concepts and experiences so that information and skills can be applied to novel and complex issues or challenges<sup>5</sup>.

When teaching new skills and knowledge, the instructor often spends a significant amount of time working on specific elements that essentially contribute to a holistic skill set. When these elements taught in isolation, they make it difficult for students to make cognitive links between the them. However, when taught with an integrated method, students have the opportunity to contextualise key skills that they would often use within the real world. Thus, merging and integrating key elements into an authentic learning experience is the way of creating integrated learning trainings.

Adopting an integrated learning approach in training can have significant benefits for the students<sup>6</sup>, such as:

- ✓ increase in understanding, retention, and application of general concepts
- ✓ better understanding of the content
- ✓ active participation in relevant real-life experiences
- ✓ connection between various curricular disciplines
- ✓ develops higher-level thinking skills
- ✓ ensures active participation

### Conclusion

Blended and integrated learning constitute modern educational practices, related to the inclusion of technological means and to the adoption of a cross-disciplinary approach to learning and training. Both

<sup>4</sup> SUNY GENESEO. <https://www.geneseo.edu/cil/what-integrative-learning>. [Accessed 27/9/2022]

<sup>5</sup> HALLMARK PUBLIC SCHOOL, 2020. INTEGRATED LEARNING: DEFINITION, CHARACTERISTICS AND BENEFITS. [online] HALLMARK PUBLIC SCHOOL. Available at: <<https://www.hallmarkpublicschool.com/integrated-learning-definition-characteristics-and-benefits/>> [Accessed 27/9/2022]

<sup>6</sup> HALLMARK PUBLIC SCHOOL, 2020. INTEGRATED LEARNING: DEFINITION, CHARACTERISTICS AND BENEFITS. [online] HALLMARK PUBLIC SCHOOL. Available at: <<https://www.hallmarkpublicschool.com/integrated-learning-definition-characteristics-and-benefits/>> [Accessed 27/9/2022]

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methods have been proved to offer benefits to the students, and their use from instructors has become common practice nowadays.

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