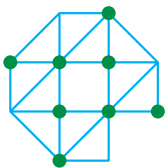


Blend your education

Implementation: Starting point for an action plan

Explanation



Acceleration plan

Educational innovation
with ICT



Facilitating professional
development of lecturers



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Acceleration plan
Educational innovation
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Dear participant,

Over the next few hours, you will work on understanding the organisational prerequisites involved in successfully implementing blended learning. To avoid confusion and be able to acquire in-depth insights into the material, it is necessary first to have a basic understanding of key background information on blended learning. This brief explanation therefore contains all the information you need to make the workshop a success. Reading this background information takes about 10 minutes.

Definitions

First, it is necessary to understand the following key definitions¹, starting with blended learning:



Blended learning: enriched, student-centred learning experiences made possible by harmonious integration of different activating strategies, achieved through the combination of face-to-face (F2F) interaction with information and communication technology (IT).

Blended learning is an activity of the student, but to make that learning possible, first the lecturer must take action. To this end, we have the following definition of blended teaching:



Blended teaching: designing and facilitating the blended learning experiences outlined above. The lecturer reflects on the student's learning journey at different levels: learning activity, course and/or curriculum.

When we take learning and teaching as a whole, the entirety of education emerges. This always happens in a broader context, and it is this context we refer to as blended education.



Blended education: the formal context of blended learning, defined by the organisation's policy and framework conditions and support for blended learning and teaching.

The latter definition illustrates why the organisation as a whole also has an important role to play in implementing and adopting blended learning. It is managers, support staff and logistics or facilities departments, among others, who have to put all organisational prerequisites in place so that lecturers and students can focus on the primary educational process.

¹ Definition classification based on EMBED model.

Organisational prerequisites

Once the definitions are clear, it is important to understand the preconditions an institution must satisfy to implement blended learning on a large scale. Three categories of contextual factors are key in this regard: strategy, structure and support².

A three-stage classification is then used for each contextual factor:

- (1) awareness and exploration,
- (2) adoption and early implementation,
- (3) successful implementation and growth.

Strategy

An institution-wide **strategy** involves choices arising from a clear vision of blended learning. A clear direction and well-considered policies are essential for this. Garrison and Kanuka (2004) propose that it is beneficial for institutions to establish a workgroup that is fully available to address issues, challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of blended learning. It is also essential to ensure adequate funding and to give lecturers time to get to grips with implementing blended learning. Below is an example of the contextual factor of 'definition & shared language'.

Factor:	Phase 1: Awareness and exploration	Phase 2: Adoption and early implementation	Phase 3: Successful implementation and growth
Definition & shared language	There is no generic/shared definition of blended learning.	A formal definition of blended learning is being prepared/has been published.	A modified definition of blended learning has been formally adopted by the educational institution at the strategic level, and there is support for it in the workplace.

² The model of Graham et al (2013) was chosen as a benchmark, as it focuses primarily on institution-wide implementation and adoption. However, to make the model even more relevant to the Dutch context, it was supplemented and rewritten based on elements from the EMBED model and the Blended Learning Readiness Scan of the HAN University of Applied Sciences.

Structure

Structure refers, among other things, to an institution's IT infrastructure, such as a reliable network and a user-friendly digital learning environment. It is also about the facilities, such as suitable learning spaces with matching scheduling and administration systems. Also consider clear guidance (governance) on implementing and regulating blended learning within study programmes with the focus on such structural aspects. This involves, among other things, the integration of lecturers' IT and design skills and the time investment required for continuous professional development. In other words, how to ensure that an institution recognises this required time investment and does not take it for granted.

Factor:	Phase 1: Awareness and exploration	Phase 2: Adoption and early implementation	Phase 3: Successful implementation and growth
Infra-structure	The technological infrastructure is primarily aimed at supporting traditional classroom teaching.	There is increased focus on offering a technological infrastructure for those who wish to implement blended learning.	There is a well-designed technical infrastructure for lecturers and students who use blended learning.

Support

The third category, **support**, involves issues related to the professional development of lecturers and the didactic and technological support available to lecturers, such as educational experts to help them with educational design. But it is also about providing incentives for lecturers to innovate education, or fostering action by offering small-scale grants, for example.

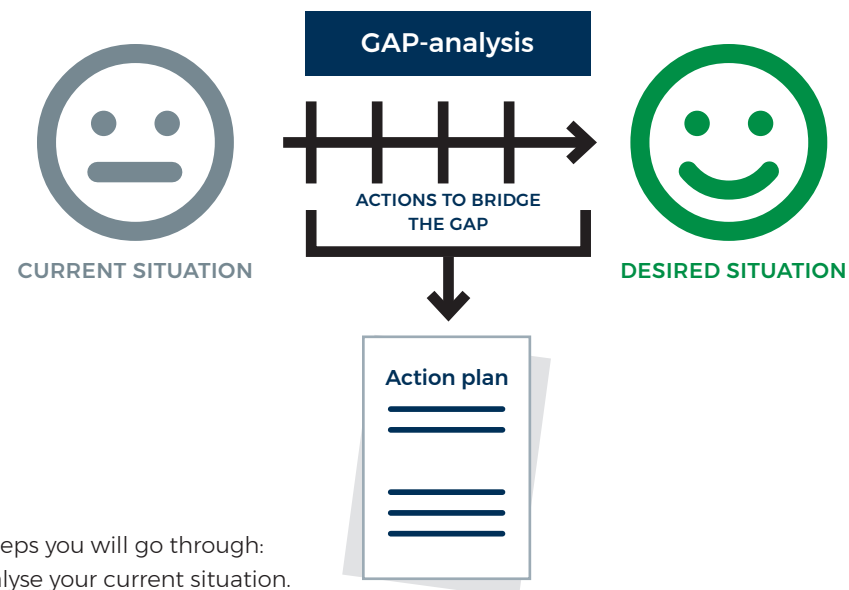
Factor:	Phase 1: Awareness and exploration	Phase 2: Adoption and early implementation	Phase 3: Successful implementation and growth
Incentive structure	There is no explicit incentive structure for implementation/innovation.	Explore incentive opportunities for training and course development and/or implementation/innovation.	Well-designed incentive structure for systematic training, development and implementation of blended learning and support for innovation.

These contextual factors are set out in a rubric (see worksheet). By rating the criteria for successful implementation, you gain insight into the current state of play within your institution and, based on that, you can explore what steps you can take to take implementation to the next level. Bear in mind, however, that Phase 3 does not automatically mean high-quality education. It 'merely' signifies that the organisational prerequisites are in place. In other words, it means lecturers can focus on the primary teaching process and work towards a suitable design for blended learning; whether they succeed in doing so is determined by the evaluation. But by working towards successful implementation and growth, the likelihood of success is significantly increased.

GAP-analysis

The self-scan is performed according to the GAP analysis method. A GAP analysis involves comparing an actual situation with a potential or desired situation, based on which it is possible to identify the steps needed to achieve the desired situation.

The figure below illustrates this process.



The steps you will go through:

1. Analyse your current situation.
2. Identify the ideal, desired situation.
3. Investigate the difference, find any shortcomings and discuss possible solutions.
4. Formulate actions to bridge the gap.

In this way, the rubric with contextual factors and criteria for success becomes a tool to perform a baseline measurement which you can use to draw up an action plan. A GAP analysis table offers guidance for this purpose (see the worksheet with the empty table). The completed example below illustrates how this table can be used.

	Current situation	Desired situation	GAP (the difference)	Action points to bridge the gap
Definition & shared language	Phase 1: There is no generic/ shared definition of blended learning.	Phase 3: A modified definition of blended learning has been formally adopted by the educational institution at the strategic level, and there is support for it in the workplace.	Many lecturers have their own definition of or misinterpret the concept (based on misconceptions) and the institution has not published a clear definition either.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Publish a clear definition formally in a memorandum. 2. Discuss the memorandum in a workshop format with all teams.

You will now work with colleagues to perform the GAP analysis within your own institution. The workshop leader will explain all the steps and provide guidance.

Good luck and have fun!



The Acceleration Plan for Educational Innovation with ICT is a four-year programme focused on bringing initiatives, knowledge, and experiences for digitalisation together. The programme is an initiative of SURF, the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, and the Association of Universities, and is organised in eight acceleration zones. In the zone Facilitating professional development for lecturers, 16 institutions are working on improving the professional development of lecturers in Dutch higher education.



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