

Determining Factors for Successful Blended Learning in Higher Education: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract : The learning process of students can be optimized by combining online teaching with face-to-face sessions. So-called blended learning offers extensive flexibility as well as contact opportunities with fellow students and teachers. Furthermore, learning can be individualized and self-regulated. The aim of this article is to investigate which factors are necessary for blended learning to be successful. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students (N = 60) and lecturers (N = 21) from different disciplines at two German universities. The questions focused on the perception of online, face-to-face and blended learning courses. In addition, questions focused on possible optimization potential and obstacles to practical implementation. The results show that on-site presence is very important for blended learning to be successful. If students do not get to know each other on-site, there is a risk of loneliness during the self-learning phases. This has a negative impact on motivation. From the perspective of the lecturers, the willingness of the students to participate in the sessions on-site is low. Especially when there is no obligation to attend, group work is difficult to implement because the number of students attending is too low. Lecturers would like to see more opportunities from the university and its administration to enforce attendance. In their view, this is the only way to ensure the success of blended learning. In addition, they see the conception of blended learning courses as requiring a great deal of time, which they are not always willing to invest. More incentives are necessary to keep the lecturers motivated to develop engaging teaching material. The study identifies factors that can help teachers conceptualize blended learning. It also provides specific implementation advice and identifies potential impacts. This catalogue has great value for the future-oriented development of courses at universities. Future studies could test its practical use.

Keywords : blended learning, higher education, teachers, student learning, qualitative research

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