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BLENDED PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE: EXPERIENCE, LEADERSHIP, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The term “blended learning” has been clarified among other related terms – “e-learning”, “hybrid online model”, “mixed-mode instruction”, “hybrid or mixed learning”, “personalized learning”, “differentiated learning”, “technology-mediated instruction”, “web-enhanced instruction” – in the context of pedagogical teacher training practice. Specific pedagogical modelling strategies to conduct such blended teacher training practice at school have been elaborated on. The objectives of the blended teacher training practice have been pointed out, such as: 1) to encourage students to be active and creative during practice; 2) to set online standards for a group or class; 3) to create the structure of the course of educational pedagogical practice with recommendations and requirements; 4) to make clear instructions for tasks; 5) to choose strategies to ensure critical thinking and cooperation in the Internet format; 6) to rank technologies to provide instruction and assessment to facilitate the formation of an online classroom community; 7) to coordinate communication channels with students using Internet tools; 8) to provide quality feedback and reflection with digital tools. Ways to enhance students’ motivation have been highlighted. Creative type of pedagogical work has been focused on. New additional skills of an efficient teacher of the 21st century have been commented on in relation to blended pedagogical practice, such as: problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, people management, coordination with others, emotional intelligence, judgment and decision making, negotiation skills, cognitive flexibility. Essential rules for giving clear instructions have been listed. The importance of self-assessment and self-reflection has been enlarged on. The scheme of such students’ self-assessment and self-reflection during their blended teacher training practice at school has been given. Pros of blended teacher training practice have been pointed out, the strongest one being an opportunity to give personalized instruction to every student. Technological literacy among teachers as one of the key problems has been pointed out among the cons of using blended teacher training practice. The list of recommendations has been drawn out as a result of the study.

Key words: *blended learning, pedagogical teacher training practice, teaching digital resources, computer-mediated learning, online teaching technologies, learning motivation.*

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ЗМІШАНА ПЕДАГОГІЧНА ПРАКТИКА: ДОСВІД, КЕРІВНИЦТВО ТА ПРОФЕСІЙНИЙ РОЗВИТОК

Термін «змішане навчання» роз'яснений серед інших суміжних термінів – «електронне навчання», «гібридна онлайн-модель», «змішаний режим навчання», «гібридне або змішане навчання», «персоналізоване навчання», «диференційоване навчання», «технологічне навчання», «навчання через Інтернет» – у контексті навчальної педагогічної практики. Розроблено конкретні стратегії педагогічного моделювання для проведення такої змішаної навчальної педагогічної практики в школі. Указано цілі змішаної навчальної педагогічної практики: 1) спонукати студентів бути активними та творчими під час практики; 2) установити онлайн-норми для групи або класу; 3) створити структуру курсу навчальної педагогічної практики з рекомендаціями та вимогами; 4) створити чіткі інструкції до завдань; 5) вибрати стратегії забезпечення критичного мислення та співпраці в Інтернет-форматі; 6) ранжувати технології для забезпечення надання інструкцій та оцінювання для сприяння формування онлайн-спільноти в класі; 7) узгодити канали зв'язку зі студентами за допомогою Інтернет-інструментів; 8) забезпечити якісний зворотний зв'язок і рефлексію за допомогою цифрових інструментів. Визначено шляхи підвищення мотивації студентів. Проаналізовано творчий тип педагогічної роботи. Нові додаткові навички ефективного вчителя 21 століття прокоментовані в контексті змішаної навчальної педагогічної практики: вирішення проблем, критичне мислення, творчість, управління людьми, координація з іншими, емоційний інтелект, формування суджень і прийняття рішень, уміння вести перемовини, когнітивна гнучкість. Зазначено основні правила надання чітких інструкцій. Здійснено наголос на важливості самооцінки й саморефлексії. Наведено схему такої самооцінки й саморефлексії студентами під час їхньої змішаної навчальної педагогічної практики в школі. Указано на позитивні аспекти змішаної навчальної педагогічної практики під час підготовки майбутніх учителів, найвагоміший із яких – можливість дати індивідуальні інструкції кожному студенту. Технологічна грамотність серед учителів як одна з ключових проблем відзначена серед мінусів використання змішаної навчальної педагогічної практики. За результатами дослідження складено перелік рекомендацій.

Ключові слова: змішане навчання, навчальна педагогічна практика, навчальні цифрові ресурси, комп'ютерне навчання, технології онлайн-викладання, навчальна мотивація.

Formulation of the problem. Blended pedagogical teacher training practice provides opportunities for engagement that grow into empowerment as students work hard to see their ideas come to fruition. These methodological recommendations help students learn specific pedagogical modelling strategies to conduct the teacher training practice at school. This guideline includes elements of the 21st century which are needed to succeed at work and in life over the coming century. Thus, complex of problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, people management, coordinating with others, emotional intelligence, judgment and decision making, negotiation, cognitive flexibility are valuable and needed in order to develop the best possible solutions for teachers-to-be.

The aim of the study is to define the rationale for blended pedagogical practice in order to enhance student engagement and benefit from collaborative learning.

The task of the paper is to study a guiding definition for blended learning, benefits, rationale for expansion, and professional development.

Presenting the main research material. In the present circumstances of lockdown blended pedagogical practice is the perfect way out. But before the explanation and description of this new kind of practice, some words should be said about the term “blended learning” as it is quite obvious that blended teacher training practice is based on blended learning.

It should be noted that in spite of the fact that the term “blended learning” has been used for more

than twenty years and is especially popular nowadays, there is still no widespread agreement either on the term itself, or its definition. We have come across that this term can be exchanged by “b-learning” (Banados, 2006), “e-learning” (Shepard, 2005), “hybrid online model” (Martyn, 2003), “mixed-mode instruction” (DeChambeau, 2011), “hybrid or mixed learning” (Stracke, 2007), “personalized learning” or “differentiated learning” (Basye, 2018), “technology-mediated instruction” (Lineberger, 2009; Nelson, 2000), “web-enhanced instruction” (Mullen, 2005) and others. There were attempts made to clarify somehow these terms. Scientists G. Smith and H. Kurthen (2007) proposed to differentiate some related terms according to percentage of usage face-to-face studying vs. online one, while C. R. Graham and C. Dziuban (2008), to avoid misunderstanding, offered to think that blended learning is simply face-to-face learning with usage of online technologies. For the purpose of this article we suggest using C. R. Graham and C. Dziuban’s explanation.

Due to variety of terms and impossibility of scientists to come to consensus about the only one, there is also a problem in the definition. For example, J. Bersin (2004) gives the following explanation “Blended learning is the combination of different training “media” (technologies, activities, and types of events) to create an optimum training program for a specific audience” (Introduction, XV). C. J. Bonk and C. R. Graham (2006) propose the definition “the combination of face-to-face instruction with computer-mediated instruction” (p. 5), where these instructions differ in time, space, fidelity and humanness. M. Oliver and K. Trigwell (2005) give at least three definitions – “the integrated combination of traditional learning with web-based online approaches” (p. 17), where traditional learning means teaching in classrooms; “the combination of media and tools employed in an e-learning environment” (p. 17), where there is only the distance course – online teaching – is possible without any offline one; and “the combination of a number of pedagogical approaches, irrespective of learning technology use”(p. 17).

So, as you can see, there is a great diversity in the attempts of the definition whereas we have cited only a small amount of them. Nevertheless, we can try to combine them and get the following: *blended learning is a deliberate combination of online and offline contact time between students and teachers.*

Coming back to blended pedagogical teacher training practice, we also consider that blended learning is a combination of online and face-to-face activities and other training modalities of pedagogical practice to develop not only professional skills but

soft ones as well. Nowadays the use of blended learning is expanding globally. We even consider it to be a fast growing trend in higher education; it is evident in professional development training and in a number of educational programs. Blended learning practices are used by students, educators and faculty staff in various teaching and learning venues. The online tools available in blended courses can also significantly enhance student engagement, ensuring that all students participate in course discussions and benefit from collaborative learning.

So, at first we planned our blended teacher training practice and set the following objectives in order to reach the outcomes:

1. Motivate students to be active and creative during the practice (*guiding, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation*).
2. Set online norms for the group or class (*coordinating with others, emotional intelligence, judgment and decision making, negotiation, cognitive flexibility*).
3. Establish a Course Structure of teacher training practice with recommendations and requirements.
4. Create clear task instructions.
5. Choose strategies for ensuring critical thinking and collaboration in an online format.
6. Range the technologies to support high-quality instruction and assessment (Zoom, Google Forms, Google Drawing, Google Classroom, Google Slides, Padlet, etc.) to nurture an online classroom community.
7. Discuss how to connect with students via online tools.
8. Provide quality feedback and reflection through digital tools.

To implement the first stage of our plan in order to enhance the effectiveness of our efforts we design tips how to kill students’ curiosity. Or – in other words – what should be avoided during our work.

Learning environment is focused on compliance to norms, standards and assessment. In terms of the higher school standards and requirements it is not an easy task to stimulate students’ curiosity and motivation. So, teachers should preclude the following situations which can reduce students’ motivation.

Dictate the learning domains. Whether offline or digital, individual or group, you’re the coordinator/teacher/mentor. You decide what is to be learned when and how, and on whose grounds. Make the schedule, the curriculum, the tests, the grading system, the feedback loops, everything, because you know everything better than students. Give them everything prepared, designed by you, a teacher.

Limit learner’s choice. Voice and choice sound great in theory, but who knows better what a learner

needs than the teacher. The teacher is the only specialist in this sphere in the group. A student can't set clear goals, give instructions etc.

Think in black and white. The teacher's choice is the only right variant; no other opinions can be acceptable. And if students are wrong there is no need to wait when they correct or improved their decision, and solve the problem. Give them the ready answer or solution.

Focus on answers, not questions. No matter how they perform in your open-ended questions and project-based learning tasks, the standards-based exams, university expectations aren't like that. The process of thinking and analysing of a question is time-consuming, better to be focused on an answer.

Force awkward collaboration and forget creativity. Whenever you can impose a partner or group-activity, do it. Collaboration is always productive even if the learning objective doesn't seem to suggest it. There is no time and possibilities for gaming, sound, and physical movement in the classroom, it's difficult to manage.

Reject inquiry-based, project-based as not "research-based". Research and data are the fundamentals of education. Measure data, calculate statistics, design a big amount of diagrams, establish better data collection tools to measure the effectiveness of progressive learning tools yourself. If there's no data showing it works, reject it.

Keep it academic. Keep the teachers training practice formal and academic. Never forget about the standards and the data. Learning standards are one way to ensure an even learning experience for all students.

Don't evoke curiosity. Always prepare everything yourself. Only you know what kind of information, when and where will be sought. Do not tell or show any doubts or hesitations in your own knowledge as students must see you as the only source of information. Spend very little time creating problem-solving questions, modelling task for projects, upgrading information, or be without react when you realize your own knowledge is insufficient.

But, joking aside, as professionals, we have been paying attention to the changes happening in the workplace and how they are affecting us. We often ask ourselves if we are skilled for the profession in this rapid development, how to coordinate with others, to make decisions, negotiate via digital resources etc. There are four types of work: *creative* (unique, imaginative, non-routine, and autonomous), *skilled* (standardized, talent-driven, professional), *rote* (routinized, outsourceable, and managed), *robotic* (algorithmic and computerized). During planning of our

practice we focused on creative work. Our students combined ideas that once seemed unrelated. Their newfound ideas helped us to reach the outcomes. Like inventors students created new forms and designed structures from scratch.

We have started to realize that we need more skills than earlier. We consider our students, future teachers of the 21st century, will not be just those who are satisfied with one fact that they can read, write etc. in the foreign language, but those who can continually learn, unlearn, and relearn throughout their career.

In some instances, relearning could be the adaptation of what you know to a new reality, for example, smartphones. We used them solely as communication devices, and now they are minicomputers, even replace PC. Future teachers have to relearn how to use a phone, have to adapt some of skills to the future profession and will also have to learn new additional skills to succeed in the 21st century. Among them there are **learning how to learn, note-taking** (*reflective journal*), **analysing information, spotting patterns and trends** (we recommend to combine ideas from the different resources). With the help of technology we can copy and paste, move blocks of text around, and group information differently, that give us a new perspective.

Communicating (written and oral) **and collaborating** help our students to shape and implement their ideas into teacher training practice, it is difficult to overestimate these skills. Another vital skill is **understanding and leveraging technology**. Technology has been changing at an unprecedented pace, so we need to understand and keep on top of it. Sometimes it's better to read articles in respected technology journals, as books may become quickly outdated.

Our guidelines for blended pedagogical practice is to bring together ideas on how we can use technology and the online environment to prepare students for synchronous educational time – be that face-to-face *or* online – and maximize learning, communication and collaboration in the classroom. The combination of a face-to-face instruction environment with an online environment within the same course allows not only capitalizing on the advantages of each but also catering for diverse learning styles and the needs of different students.

Giving the clear instruction is crucial to conduct a lesson or an activity. In order to get students' attention they should be clear. So, we used short sentences; were chronological; supported students in their attempts; checked understanding.

At first most of the students seemed to have understood it, but when they had to do instructions themselves, only a very small number of those students

were able to fulfil all the requests. Some of them were ready to give up. But, we gave them the task to design essential rules for giving clear instructions. Some of them are presented below.

- Instructions should be as simple as possible and instructions need to be logical.

- As a teacher, we need to ask ourselves questions such as: *What is the core command I am trying to convey? What must students know to complete the activity? Which information needs to be given first? What materials are needed?*

- At first you should attract students’ attention. Then give all the instructions prior to the beginning of the activity.

- Make use of body language, written commands, etc, not only in spoken language. Try to demonstrate the task of the activity.

- Group the instructions and check their understanding. Be clear in order to reduce interruptions and misunderstandings. Creating well delivered instructions will help all types of students to understand them and reach the results.

The ability of self-assessment and self-reflection is crucial for students on practice, being in the role of teacher assistants, planning teaching, undertaking

microteaching and generally supporting the English teachers. Let us demonstrate some tables developed from “An Interactive Guide to Understanding and Applying the InTASC Standards to Teacher Effectiveness and Student Success” for teachers-to-be to reflect on and instructions for filling in: (1) Complete the following sections rating whether you consider and do listed in the statement points rarely, occasionally, frequently, or always in your teaching practice by circling the number that corresponds to how often you engage in behaviour. (2) Add up the numbers in each column to create a total for the Learner and Learning; Content Knowledge and Skills; Instructional Practices; and Professional Responsibility (Table 1).

We recommend students to consider exploring the standard, learning progression, and resources in the area for which they had the lowest total.

The results show that blended pedagogical practice is designed to meet personal learning needs of every student by allowing tutors to formulate individual educational strategies and instructions. It combines both – face to face and online communication between learners and educators. Due to this students can work with tutors when they are at university or

Table 1

I. School Practice Experience: Understanding Learners and Learning

	<i>I rarely consider and do this as a teacher assistant</i>	<i>I occasionally consider and do this as a teacher assistant</i>	<i>I frequently consider and do this as a teacher assistant</i>	<i>I always consider and do this as a teacher assistant</i>
<i>I apply what I know about learners’ psyche to my microteaching.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I consider psychological factors in language learning and psychological features of individual learners when I design microteaching learning experiences.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I discuss these questions with my students’ teacher of English: these definite students’ development, interests and instructional needs.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I incorporate the tools of language development, including academic language, into planning and instruction while microteaching.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I address individual needs of exceptional learners in my classes by adapting my instruction, materials, resources and tools.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I guide learners to take responsibility for their own learning and develop their learning autonomy.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I communicate verbally and non-verbally in ways that demonstrate respect for the students while microteaching in my classes.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I involve students in setting expectations for a positive and safe learning climate while conducting microteaching.</i>	1	2	3	4
Total for Each Column				

Table 1 (Continued)

II. School Practice Experience: Subject Knowledge & Skills

<i>I am aware of common student misconceptions in the subject I am to micro-teach these semesters and use this awareness when planning units and microteaching to ensure accurate student understanding.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I expand my personal subject matter knowledge by learning more about the subject I am to teach.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I keep in mind criteria of truly communicative activities while planning microteaching.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I keep in mind importance of students' inner motivation providing opportunities for them to learn and apply literacy and communication skills while conducting my microteaching.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I engage learners in applying the methods of inquiry for the subject I am to micro-teach.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I make learners apply their knowledge in meaningful real life contexts.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I engage students in activities that help them to learn and apply 21 century key skills.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I engage students in reflecting on the connections between what they are studying and what they already know.</i>	1	2	3	4
Total for Each Column				

III. School Practice Experience: Instruction and Assessment

<i>I use a variety of formative assessments in my classroom to determine what learners know and to provide them with the feedback while conducting microteaching.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I use data from assessments to help form future learning experiences.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I involve my students in generating criteria by which to assess their work.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I match the assessments I use to the type of learning goal(s) I am assessing.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>For non-standardized assessments, I modify classroom assessments and conditions to enable learners with special needs to demonstrate their knowledge and skill.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I use technology to help teach knowledge, skills and concepts.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I vary the instructional role I assume based upon the objectives/outcomes of the lesson.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I guide learners to identify their own strengths and needs as learners and how to appropriately take responsibility for their own learning.</i>	1	2	3	4
Total for Each Column				

IV. School Practice Experience: Professional Responsibility and Development

<i>I regularly take part in professional learning activities, use technology to get greater flexibility and access to continuing professional development.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I engage in non-required professional learning about the things I feel I need to improve.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I collaborate with my University teachers and group mates to review and reflect on a wide range of evidence of student learning to learn how effective our practices are and to explore ways to improve.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I explore and reflect upon how my personal identity affects my perceptions of students and can create bias while conducting my microteaching.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I help to establish a climate of trust, critical reflection and inclusiveness in the classroom.</i>	1	2	3	4
<i>I share my plans and instruction and invite feedback from my group mates.</i>	1	2	3	4
Total for Each Column				
Sum				

school, as well as use additional online resources at home. Another benefit pointed out is the potential which blended learning offers for independent learning. The online components can not only provide each learner with the possibility of recycling at their own speed and in their own time what they have already experienced, but can also offer extra opportunities

for further learning both from course-specific materials and from materials from other web sources. In addition, such experiences can help students become less dependent on teachers and more self-reliant both during the course and in subsequent language learning experiences. Such independent experience can be enhanced by face-to-face preparation and follow up

in class guided by a teacher. They can ask teachers for some help or advice either at university (school) or online via digital resources, and work on their projects at home, using online materials. So, this approach leaves more space for students' creativity and allows to dive deeper into subjects, using both offline and online opportunities. However, this method also has some cons. The successful realization of blended pedagogical practice depends on a number of factors. It requires high level of students' motivation. Not all students engaged in blended teacher training practice have a sufficient level of motivation to study. For such students blended teacher training is a weak method since their motivation is poor. Inspiring students and creating a personal curriculum for every learner becomes a real problem.

We have identified some pros of using blended teacher training practice. As we have already mentioned, the strongest side of blended learning is an opportunity to give personalized instruction to every student. They have access to helpful online materials anywhere and at any time. Students can benefit from digital materials, which include online libraries and different databases at any convenient time and place.

Blended pedagogical practice provides interactive educational experience. Students can communicate with tutors using videoconferencing and other ways of communication that enhance collaboration between them.

Obviously, there are cons of using blended teacher training practice. The technology can be challenging. One of the key problems is the technological literacy among teachers. Not all digital resources are easy to use. Moreover, blended learning makes teachers overwork. There is a great deal of additional work for teachers involved in blended pedagogical practice. They have to create syllabus, and dedicate a lot of time and effort to find the right balance between online and face-to-face learning. They have to motivate not only students, but themselves as well. Besides, students can experience cognitive load. Some teachers overdo activities, content and tasks, overloading learners.

Having a digital-friendly educational environment may cause more plagiarizing from online resources. Moreover, there are a number of unreliable online resources with false data or unreliable facts.

Conclusions and perspectives of further research. Blended pedagogical practice, as any other method or approach, has its advantages and disadvantages. The combination of online education and face-to-face training can be beneficial, but only when it is wisely applied. Sometimes there are risks to overbalance the methods, not all students are motivated, and some of them feel confused about it. However, we believe that the disadvantages of such teacher training practice can be overcome. What is more, if teachers provide strong support to students, more benefits will be gained.

As a result of this study, the following recommendations can be made. Firstly, blended pedagogical practice presents many benefits such as flexibility, provision for different learning styles, increased collaborative opportunities and greater independent study potential. Nevertheless, there should be a definite topic and skills link between face-to-face and online work, which learners need to be made aware of. In terms of technical support, it is preferable to have introductory face-to-face computer sessions to aid sign up, navigation and communication. If students have limited online learning experience, it is advisable to scaffold their participation by initially making involvement a course necessity and providing guided tasks. As confidence increases, they are likely to become more independently motivated to contribute in a less structured manner.

Incorporating blended pedagogical proactive in the way described above has proved to be a good compromise and does not take away face-to-face teaching time. In addition, it is another step towards the ideal of autonomous learners being responsible for their own progress and taking the necessary steps to meet their needs. Combining the advantages of face-to-face and blended learning opportunities such as blended pedagogical practice has proved a step in the right direction for this particular learning context.

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