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BLENDED LEARNING: A HYBRID INNOVATION
IN MODERN SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

Online education is one of the fastest growing phenomena in K-12 education in the United States and Europe today. It's a train for which every school district is at waiting at the station, if not hopping on board. Over half of the states in the USA currently have some form of state-run virtual school, with additional state programs in the planning stage. Additionally, many school districts in Europe have created virtual education programs or schools, or make virtual courses offered by other providers available to students to address perceived needs. Various surveys have reported that at least one third of high school students have had some form of online education experience [2].

On the other hand, with the growing embrace of technology into education, there emerges a whole bunch of new concepts and technical terminology in the teaching and learning literature to the point that it becomes cumbersome to keep track of the novelties in this field. Sometimes the lines are blurred and you cannot even differentiate between one concept and the other. The list of such technical terminology is growing bigger and bigger and now we have: blended learning, virtual classroom, MOOCs, asynchronous learning, virtual learning environment, Online Lab, to mention but some.

The aim of the article is to analyze such a phenomenon in online education as blended learning to help people anticipate and plan for the likely effects of blended learning on the classrooms of today and schools of tomorrow.

In many schools abroad, blended learning is emerging as a hybrid innovation that is a sustaining innovation relative to the traditional classroom. This hybrid form is an attempt to deliver "the best of both worlds"—that is, the advantages of online

learning combined with all the benefits of the traditional classroom. In contrast, other models of blended learning appear disruptive relative to the traditional classroom. They do not include the traditional classroom in its full form; they often get their start among nonconsumers; they offer benefits that accord to a new definition of what's good; and they tend to be more foolproof to purchase and operate.

The definition of blended learning is a formal education program in which a student learns:

(1) at least in part through online learning, with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace;

(2) at least in part in a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home;

(3) and the modalities along each student's learning path within a course or subject are connected to provide an integrated learning experience.

The language in the blended-learning definition is intended to distinguish the definition from other common forms of learning that many confuse with blended learning. The confusion arises because certain education practices - such as traditional instruction, technology-rich instruction, informal online learning, and full-time virtual learning—share some features of blended learning but differ in key ways that exclude them from fitting precisely in the category [3].

One common feature of blended learning is that when a course takes place partly online and partly through other modalities, the various modalities are usually connected. In other words, what the students learn online informs what they learn face-to-face, and vice versa. Furthermore, if students have control over their pace, this control often extends to the entire subject that is blended, not only to the online-learning portion of the coursework. Some researchers believe this connection between modalities within a course or subject is fundamental to blended learning and should be included in the definition itself.

To our mind, one critical part of the definition of blended learning is that it involves "some element of student control of time, place, path, and/or pace." According to the main idea of blended learning, learning is no longer restricted to the

school day or the school year, to the walls of the classroom and to the pedagogy used by the teacher. In our Ukrainian educational environment it's hardly possible.

There are 4 main models of blended learning. In a **Rotation** model, students rotate on a fixed schedule, spending some time immersed in traditional face-to-face learning and some time learning online. This model includes four sub-models:

- The **Station Rotation** model involves students rotating in a contained classroom.

- The **Lab Rotation** model involves students learning in a classroom and going to a learning lab for online learning.

- The **Flipped Classroom** model involves rotation between a school for face-to-face teacher-guided work, and the student's home or an off-site location for online learning.

- The **Individual Rotation** model gives each student an individualized playlist.

The **Flex** model "is one in which online learning is the backbone of student learning". Student schedules are individualized and their main teacher is off-site.

The **A La Carte** model combines online learning and brick-and-mortar education. In this model, students take one or more courses online with an online teacher, and also maintain brick-and-mortar education. Online courses are taken either off-site or in the brick-and-mortar schools.

The **Enriched Virtual** model lets students divide their learning between brick-and-mortar and online methods. Within each course, students split their time between both learning methods [1].

Today blended learning is increasingly used abroad as a means to produce improved learning outcomes, but while increasingly used in many fields in the USA and Europe it remains in its infancy in Ukraine. One may say that we definitely use computers in education, but the difference between blended learning and just adding computers to the way we have always operated is that there is a regular and intentional change in delivery to boost learning and leverage teacher talent.

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