

2. Course Design for adult learners

The implementation of learning requires the maintenance of a specific order, the individual phases of the training must be followed. After a deep analysis of the learners needs and availability, the best method we can use in our “Flip Edu Up” project is the Blended learning approach. That is, then reason, we will guide you how to design a “Blended learning course” for adult learners. The beginning and end of the training cycle are clearly marked. The middle part can be repeated many times¹.

- The first phase of training is carried out in a **stationary form** (group organization). Participants get to know the trainer and receive information on how to continue their work during the training. The leader has a chance to make sure that everyone is able to use the materials posted on the e-learning platform. This phase is so important that participants who are not used to remote learning can make up for their shortcomings. The integration of the group is also significant, which greatly facilitates subsequent, also remote, contacts. The next phase is gaining news, it is carried out on the platform. During this phase, trainees gain knowledge, ask questions that are unclear to them and build up a knowledge base for practical application. They also often perform simple tasks. Participants can learn at their own pace and in their own style.
- After this learning phase, there is a **non-stationary phase** - learning skills. Training participants meet during online classroom classes after the preparations in the previous phase, thanks to which this part can be a workshop focused on practical skills. The trainer has the opportunity to use all the advantages of online classroom classes. This phase is essential, especially in the case of soft skills training, personal skills, etc., such as assertiveness, building self-confidence, building an effective team or effective self-presentation.
- The final step is **evaluation and certification**. It takes place mainly in a stationary form, especially if the training was of a longer nature. In this case, the ending can take a solemn form. Completion and summary of the educational process can be combined with examinations and certification of participants. After the training, participants usually still have access to the training materials on the web and often also keep in touch with the trainer and group.

In Blended learning, we can distinguish the following learning methods and possibilities:

- **Synchronized learning** - means that the trainer and learner are in the same place [virtual – class] at the same time. Training generally takes place in a group, which enables interaction between participants.
- **Asynchronous learning** - breaks the trainer and participant's time away from unity. They generally take the form of interactive e-learning trainings, conducted through an educational platform, thanks to which the training organizer can manage access to training and track participants' progress. Various types of teaching content can also be treated as asynchronous trainings - e.g., recordings of speeches from conferences or traditional trainings, presentation materials, educational films, etc. Unlike other

¹ Urszula Cimoch; Wojewódzka Biblioteka Publiczna i Centrum Animacji Kultury w Poznaniu; Jak zaprojektować efektywne szkolenie blended learning? <http://www.ebib.pl/2009/104/a.php?cimoch>

educational content, e-learning trainings are interactive, i.e. they provide the participant with feedback.

Blended learning is a variety of forms of learning that can be delivered in various ways - not only e-learning training (so-called online courses) and traditional lectures. There are also many other methods of transferring knowledge via the Internet, which can be adapted to the different learning needs of the participants.

The trainer should look at blended learning as blocks from which he can create new combinations, buildings or structures. The richness of forms of learning and the possibility of juggling with tools allows the trainer to build a competitive advantage and create an ideal offer tailored to the needs and technological capabilities of learners.

Blended learning may include teaching:

Traditionally in the room:

- lectures,
- discussions,
- demonstrations,
- practical workshops,
- group problem-solving,
- role playing,
- brainstorming,

In an e-learning way:

- interactive e-learning training,
- webinars,
- blogs,
- forums,
- chats,
- online social tools,

When properly applied, blended learning enables learners to learn at their own pace, and at a time and place that suit them. Moreover, adult learners have the opportunity to take responsibility for their learning. Perhaps the greatest advantage of Complementary Learning courses, however, is that they place learners at the center of the teaching and learning process.

The magic of mixed training consists primarily in the proper matching of the content of the training and the methods of its implementation to the recipients and training goals to be achieved.



In designing a training course, it is important to break the course into appropriate modules and maintain the content relevant to the areas in question.²

- The first step in designing a training course is primarily developing the concept. It is important to define the purpose of the entire training and the operational objectives, describing what knowledge and skills the participant is expected to acquire upon completion.
- The second step is to define the requirements for the completion of subsequent modules and the entire training, design the methods of completing the credits (tests, tasks, group projects, etc.) and clearly present them to the participants. This point also includes descriptions of requirements, deadlines and the method of passing. It is worth introducing team cooperation, which is more and more desirable on the labour market, into the evaluation system.
- In the third step, in the case of blended learning, there is a distinction between what can be done in traditional training and what can be delivered to participants via the e-learning platform. Therefore, it is necessary to extract theoretical material, i.e., discuss legal acts, all kinds of information about systems, etc., and post it on the platform.
- It should also be remembered that the program, which cannot be implemented theoretically, will be conducted traditionally, e.g., training in soft skills. One can consider whether to conduct a material knowledge test before starting the traditional training. Then we will be sure that the trainees have mastered the theoretical knowledge, thanks to which the trainer will be able to freely refer to the information posted on the platform.

E-learning training should have its own structure and include basic elements, which include:

- Welcoming and presenting the training title.
- A short instruction on navigating the training slides - it is enough if on one screen individual navigation elements are collected with a description, what will happen after clicking on a given icon.
- Introduction to the topic - should present the general objectives of the activities to be carried out, briefly describe the substantive material and present its structure, if possible, indicate how the knowledge can be applied in practice (see the figure above).
- Core content - it is good if the material will be divided into smaller parts.
- Summary - it is important that it relates to the purpose of the course and briefly, after each chapter and at the end of the course, brings the most important information together.
- Testing part - it is important for the participant as it allows to determine the level of acquaintance with the material.

² Jak rozwijać firmę. Podstawy zarządzania dla MMŚP [on-line]. [Warszawa: Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości]. Dostępny w World Wide Web: <http://www.akademiaparp.gov.pl> (dostępny po zalogowaniu).

- Additional resources to deepen the core content - for people who are ready to expand their knowledge due to high expectations for the course.

It is good to divide the training into modules. The material is then structured and easy to navigate, especially if the program gives us an additional opportunity to move to different modules, to different lessons within modules and to individual slides within the lesson.

It is beneficial for the trainee to refer to the previously presented knowledge. Thus, we create associations and remind the content, which serves better remembering and understanding.

Carefully designed material should take into account the multimedia capabilities of the course, e.g., present the content using charts, diagrams and pictures. Remember: a blended learning course without graphics is boring! Apart from making the graphics more attractive, it is necessary to consider various forms of participants' activity and topics for discussion in the forum. Expressing your own opinions on a given topic will consolidate the content. A similar task will be fulfilled by questions and tasks (up to two slides) prepared every 2, 5 or 10 screens (depending on the accumulation of information) to test the acquired knowledge. Feedback about the correctness of the exercise should appear on the same screen as the task.

Such short tests will also be used for the participant's current self-assessment, as well as for the assessment of the adult learner by the trainer. It is worth developing auxiliary materials, such as: basic literature, supplementary literature, and a dictionary of key terms. The trainer's task is to plan group work in accordance with the guidelines of various methods: problem method, project method, case analysis, role playing, discussion.

In the implementation of this task, the design and implementation of the concept of the group communication system on the platform will help. Simple guidelines will help you design and manufacture e-learning training screens or create multimedia content in general:

- navigation should be intuitive and consider logical connections,
- messages in the presentation should be simple and legible,
- it is worth introducing a leitmotif,
- the size of the objects should be balanced,
- users should be provided with technical support and time for testing,
- you need to define the way of evaluation,
- watch out for typos,
- the excess of objects on the website can be distracting,
- it is useful to use diagrams,
- charging time should be relatively short,
- the duration of one lesson should not exceed 45 minutes,
- the students' attention is stimulated by various stimuli,
- content elements should be emphasized to keep the audience's attention,
- it is worth using visual associations,
- remember that data is read from left to right and from top to bottom,
- the objects on the right appear larger,
- a line running from the lower left corner to the upper right (rising) symbolizes optimism and vice versa,



- you should avoid creating a compact, uniform text (sentences should be grouped into short paragraphs),
- larger, brighter, and intensely coloured elements attract attention, make the impression of being more important,
- lists should not exceed 6 items,
- charts up to 7 columns,
- tables not wider than 5 columns,
- the pie chart should contain a maximum of 7 slices,
- sans-serif typeface is much clearer,
- it is worth using the text in the headings with the font size 28-36 points, and in the text part 16-24 points.

Creating e-learning content for self-study requires, in addition to the knowledge and skills of the person conducting and designing the training, the involvement of specialists in various fields: authors, experts, methodologists, graphic designers, IT specialists, etc. that the training will be perfect.

Self-study materials must be designed to accommodate the different learning styles of adults and should therefore use a variety of teaching aids. Since the participant will use them outside the trainer's control, they must be attractive and engaging enough to keep his attention for a longer period of time. For this purpose, delivery forms can be used, i.e., the transmission of messages by means of text, sound, image and computer interactions. The implementation of the computer interaction is very intuitive for the user.

Important aspects when building a course³:

If the adult learner has difficulty expressing himself, then try...

- Written report
- Artistic creation
- Exhibit or showcase
- Chart, graph, or table
- Photo essay
- Map
- Review of films
- Charade or pantomime
- Demonstration
- Taped report

If the adult learner has difficulty writing, then try...

- Use a format requiring little writing
 - Multiple-choice

³ Bulloch, K. (n.d.). *How to adapt your teaching strategies to student needs*. How to Adapt Your Teaching Strategies to Student Needs | LD Topics | LD OnLine. Retrieved December 6, 2021, from <http://www.ldonline.org/article/370/>.

- Programmed material
- True/false
- Matching
- Reduce or omit assignments requiring writing
- Encourage shared notetaking

If the learner has difficulty expressing himself in writing, then try...

- Oral reports
- Tape-recorded report
- Tape of an interview
- Collage, cartoon, or other art
- Maps
- Diorama, 3-D materials, showcase exhibits
- Photographic essay
- Panel discussion
- Mock debate
- Review of films and presentation of an appropriate one to the class

