

3. Implementation

Successful implementation of a blended learning programme requires to be coordinated and coherent planning. This includes thinking about and planning of financial and technical resources, human resources, course scheduling, tutor and student support. Collaboration with teachers and ongoing evaluation are essential for the successful implementation of blended learning programme.

3.1. Preparation before the training

Preparation for training usually takes between five and ten days, but some advanced training can take up to twenty days. If the training will last two days, you will need at least four days to prepare, and at least ten days for the advanced training. The length of preparation time is also depended on the experience of the trainer.

At the beginning of the preparation for the training, you should consider:

- **Goal of the training:** What is the goal of the training? What is the content of the training? What will trainees learn? You should think about how to measure the goals after the training.
- **Target audience:** Who is your target audience (level of education, background, age, gender, mother tongue of the trainees, cultural differences...)?
- **Group size:** How many participants will attend the training? Think about the training venue, assistance, etc. When you have groups up to ten trainees you don't need assistance, but when the group is larger, think about logistical support. If your group has more than twenty trainees, you need to think about training assistance.
- **Success/fail factors:** You should make a list of factors that affect your training (technical issues, health problems, difficult trainees, time-related problems, etc.). For each of the factors, think about the solution.

One way to plan the training is to consider **six-steps of Kern cycle** of curriculum development.

- First, we have to **identify the problem**.
- Perform targeted **needs assessment**.
- When we get the basic information, we can **formulate goals and learning objectives**.
- Then we select **educational strategies**.
- Think about the **implementation** and
- **Evaluation and feedback**.



When planning the training, you need to consider both traditional and online teaching. The online part requires consideration about the technical support that is available. It is essential to consider the technical infrastructure (hardware and software), which must be accessible to all participants. Consider the use of open sources (Moodle, Mahara, etc.).

There should be a common thread or guiding theme to help navigate the curriculum and give educators and learners a bigger picture of all activities (face-to-face and online).

Consider combining a variety of different teaching methods and settings. A variety of teaching methods can lead to more successful learning. The following combinations of online and face-to-face learning are possible:

- Online part as a preparation for a face-to-face course (flipped classroom)
- Online part as a follow-up to the face-to-face part
- Online elements during face-to-face lesson

Parts of the traditional and online curricula, learning objectives, teaching methods and (formative and summative) assessment need to be aligned and consistent with the model used.

The following principles should be taken into account when planning:

- **Learners activation:** Learners should be active before, during and after the training. They should be involved in testing (pilot) activities and learning scenarios. Their feedback should be obtained and used for further refinement and development of the training. By involving the target group during the development process, it is more likely that you will meet the needs of your future learners.
- Training should be **problem centred** with real-life problems.
- It should include **demonstration of new knowledge or skills**.
- Learners should be able to **apply new knowledge or skills**.
- Learners should have some control over when, where and how they will learn.

3.2 Training implementation (tone, pace, light, temperature, etc.)

It's a good idea to start the training with some socialization event, such as an icebreaker. Introductions and icebreakers can make a big difference to the classroom dynamics. Icebreakers are fun activities that make it easier for participants to share their opinions, exchange ideas, get to know each other and make the class more connected. They can also be used to ease the transition to online learning and familiarise learners with the online environment.

When preparing training **materials**, you should focus on:

- Training material that is **easy to understand**. The language used must be simple. If possible, avoid complexity, long sentences, many commas, double negatives, even stay away from negatives etc.
- If the material is extensive, consider creating a **table of contents**. A good table of contents makes it easy for participants to find what they are looking for.
- Projected slides and/or printed handouts must be **readable**. Fonts must be big enough and clear, text-to-background contrast, etc. Consider that sometimes less is more (slides, bullet points, etc.).
- **Clear instructions** for exercise hand-outs (if you use them).

To make a good **presentation**, it is important to pay attention to:

- Ensure **variety** so that participants don't lose focus and get bored. This can be achieved by considering the different learning styles of the participants. Each individual has his/her own approach to learning and learning style. Some prefer to learn through text-based material, while others prefer to learn in an interactive environment. And that's the biggest advantage of blended learning - it can create unique, targeted and personalized learning pathways.
- The **visual elements** used must be seen and understood easily. This means that writing or drawing on a flipchart, whiteboard, blackboard or other visual aids used must be in a large enough font to be seen from the back of the classroom. The slides should only contain; you should not go into details. Be careful with the use of colors, use only black, blue and red as these colors are easiest to see. Do not use too many colors in one text, use them only to highlight important information.
- **Avoid long speeches**, as participants find it difficult to follow presentation and they quickly lose interest. The upper limit for a speech is 30 minutes in one period. You can have maximum of seven speaking periods per day. To break the monotony of speeches you should use other training methods, such as group discussion, different exercises, etc.



- The use of **multimedia tools** has a big impact on what participants take away from the lecture. Use video chat to encourage the social aspect of learning. Create a community discussion board or something similar that allows participants to interact with each other.

Instructions for the trainer:

- Trainer should prepare **session plan** that includes information about what needs to be done, when it needs to be done and how long will it take. The inexperienced trainer is advised to prepare a detailed session plan and check during the training that the plan is being followed. It is very important to plan opportunities for participant involvement.
- The **emotional and physical state** of the trainer plays a big role in the presentation. A confident and relaxed trainer is usually more successful. If the atmosphere is relaxed, students have more fun. A genuine and strong presence is essential in a blended learning approach.
- **Body language, tone of voice and language** (the words used) are key to successful training. Research shows that 55% of successful communication depends on body language, 38% on tone of voice and only 7% on the actual words spoken.
- The trainer must **stay in contact** with the students. They should not have their back to the audience, even when writing on whiteboard, blackboard, flip-chart, etc., reading from a screen or using a laser pointer.
- Trainer needs to **be out there with the students**, so that he or she can notice if they are going too fast or have said something that needs to be repeated. The trainer needs to pay attention to the student's body language.
- **Metaphors, meaningful, contextualized stories** work very well in lectures. Use them to illustrate examples.
- If you will be speaking in a **foreign language** during the training, make sure your language skills are good enough to make the training a success.
- **Avoid slang, figures of speech and local or cultural references.**
- It is important to ask questions and encourage participants to speak up and ask questions themselves.
- **Feedback** is very important for effective learning and should be presented in online and face-to-face phases. The best way to give feedback is the co-called feedback sandwich. Start by thanking them for their efforts and point out the good things. Then present your findings on the things that need to be improved and how to improve them. Finally, end on a positive and encouraging note. Remember to moderate critique, as too much criticism has negative effect. Feedback can also be incorporated into evaluation activities.
- Be prepared for the worst but hope for the best.



- In almost all training groups, there will be someone who will be hard to handle. The **“difficult” participant** may want to teach the trainer, show off their knowledge or experience, or talk about their personal life. It is important to remind them you are in charge. Make it clear when it is acceptable to ask questions or make remarks, and when it is not. Do not allow participants to become offensive or hurtful towards each other. Such behaviour is unacceptable and must be stopped. In such cases it is best to talk to the offender face to face.

Closing of training is the beginning not the end. It raises questions for the participants about what they have learned, how to use their new knowledge and what they still need to learn. The training wrap up should be sensible.

- Trainer may decide to end the training if the learning objectives have been met. They can do this if the learning objectives are clear and achievable.
- The trainer may prepare additional material for the participants. Materials usually include checklists, templates for applying the knowledge, tips for further learning.

The training may include a test (oral, written, computerized) at the end.

