2.1.4.1 Script LESSON 1 "Introducing Blended Learning"

[Blended learning - the best of both worlds. In this section you will learn what we mean by blended learning and how you can best benefit from this blended learning course.]

In spring 2022, it will be two years since the coronavirus pandemic spread rapidly through Europe and largely paralysed public life. People's freedom of movement was restricted, many shops were closed, theatres, cinemas and sports clubs had to cease operations. Remote working increased rapidly. Schools, universities and adult education institutions also had to stop their face-to-face classes and were forced to convert their teaching to digital formats as quickly as possible. Education experts spoke of a digitalisation push for education.

The coronavirus pandemic with its restrictions means a caesura for many adult education providers. Traditional, predictable patterns of participation in adult education have been abruptly interrupted, and whether they will revive and become effective again is more than questionable. Many adult education institutions are currently wondering what the future holds for them.

There is no doubt that the world has changed by leaps and bounds in the past two coronavirus years in terms of digital media use. For the vast majority of people, video calls are now a matter of course, many have had experience with teleworking, and acquiring new knowledge via the internet and learning with the help of small tutorials is now a matter of course. Contemporary adult education starts here and asks how the digital formats realised in times of compartmentalisation can also be included in educational work in the future. Looking to the future, the way forward for adult education certainly lies in the diversity of formats and the importance of blended learning will increase. Such an educational offer combining online and face-to-face teaching can take many forms, so blended learning is a concept that can be applied very flexibly to any group and course in adult education. And because it is so variable, blended learning will become the "new normal" in adult education.

The project "Flip Edu Up", funded by the European Union within the framework of the Erasmus Plus programme, has set itself the goal of supporting institutions and pedagogical staff in adult education on this path to the "new normal" and, above all, to demonstrate the potential that lies in blended learning.

In this course you have the opportunity to deal with blended learning comprehensively and in depth. However, since the term "blended learning" is used in many different ways, we want to clarify right at the beginning how the term "blended learning" is used in this course.

By blended learning we mean a pedagogical approach in which adult learners spend part of their learning time online with digital media and tools and another part in the previously familiar face-to-face classroom. The idea behind this is that on the one hand the learners have the advantages of digital media and tools such as maximum control over the time, place and pace of their learning and are thus very flexible, but on the other hand they can also benefit from the advantages of learning on site together with the teacher and the other participants. Experience shows that the direct contact and encounter with other learners and with the teacher has a special quality and is simply fun.

Let me therefore systematically recapitulate the most important terms. By blended learning we mean a pedagogical approach in which adult learners spend part of their learning time online with digital media and tools and another part in the previously familiar face-to-face classroom.

Online learning assumes that learners can actually go online, which means that they have wi-fi access at home, at work or at the educational institution, or that they have a contract with a mobile phone provider that includes the provision of a data volume.

By face-to-face learning we mean learning on-site at the educational institution (or also at the workplace or during excursions), usually together with other learners and a teacher in different social forms.

Blended learning is not the same as hybrid learning. Hybrid learning (or hybrid conferencing) is a setting where some of the learners or participants are on-site and some are online via video conferencing software such as ZOOM.

This course is about blended learning and you will have the opportunity to learn about blended learning in a comprehensive and in-depth way. Broadly speaking, the course is divided into two parts, a more conceptual part and an operational, practical part. You are now in the first, more conceptual part, the introduction to blended learning. Next, we will take a closer look at teaching modalities such as group discussion, independent work, small group collaboration and one-on-one check-ins, as well as models of blended learning such as station rotation, flex, a la carte and enriched virtual. We will then discuss how to get started with blended learning by introducing the learning arc. In more detail we will look at how to blend group discussions, how to blend independent work, how to blend small group collaboration, how to blend one-on-one check-ins, and we will look at how to blend assessment and reflection. Finally, we will introduce the SAMR model to explore blending by discussing what is possible from a technical point of view and what makes sense from an andragogical point of view.

To conclude this introduction, we would like to give you three messages to take to heart as golden rules.

In this course you will be introduced to a variety of possibilities, including different variations of blended learning and a wide range of media and tools. Look forward to it, talk about it with your colleagues and try new things. And now our first message. Think about the context in which you work as an education worker. You will soon realise that some things can be implemented in your institution, but some things cannot or not yet. Take your time, give time to others, to participants, to management, to colleagues. You are wise if you

clearly recognise the current possibilities and also develop an idea of how the next development steps can be taken together with the management and colleagues.

But never forget - and this is our second message - that the pedagogical, in this case the andragogical challenges must always be at the centre. With all the desirable fascination for the new world of digital media and tools, do not forget that the integration of digital media and tools into adult education is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. And the end is the expansion of learning opportunities for as many adults as possible and certainly also an expanded didactic quality.

The third message concerns the number of possibilities that already exist. Anyone who seriously explores blended learning encounters a flood of digital media and tools that is almost impossible to keep track of. There is probably hardly anything that does not already exist. You just haven't discovered it yet. Don't try to reinvent the wheel. Use what already exists and pay respect to the person who invented it.