

Module material

Project: Flip Ed Up

Module 2. Blended Learning

Submodule 1: Background

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2.1.4.4 Script LESSON 4 "How to blend group discussions"

[Although we recommend starting and ending classes with a face-to-face group discussion, there may be situations where it is not possible to start or end teaching face-to-face. Or you may find some online group activities useful. Since we assume that you are familiar with face-to-face group sessions on site, let's now look at some ideas on how to conduct group discussion online.]

Most of us are nowadays familiar with video conferencing tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, BigBlueButton, GoToMeeting or Webex, to name a few. These applications can easily be used for online seminars, so-called webinars, and offer an experience that is close to an on-site group meeting. You can see your learners' faces and talk to them directly. Learners can answer questions, ask their own questions and interact with you and the other participants. You can share screens, create small groups, share whiteboards, split learners into groups to discuss a topic, and record and share sessions so learners can view the session again at any time.

For you as a teacher these applications may not be first choice since you usually would prefer onsite face-to-face group sessions. However, they are a great substitute if onsite sessions are not possible. As with any group teaching, engagement of the learners is crucial. Therefore, you should be familiar with the features provided by the video conference system, you use - especially the ones for interaction with learners, such as breakout rooms and learners reactions for example emojis such as raise hand, smileys or clap hands. You may also use polls, shared whiteboards, live captions and integration of other software for example for presentation and for sharing video. Check out the features of the video conference system that you have chosen for yourself respectively the one that is provided by the education organization you work for. And test run it before you have your first teaching with learners.

A handy tip to get started: invite a colleague or a friend for a test run with the video conference app so you can "click every button" and have fun even if something goes wrong.

A common online method to get a group going is to use a forum, chat or posts for asynchronous group discussions. In a forum, learners can share and discuss and thus learn with and from each other. A strength of an asynchronous approach such as a forum is that learners who need more time to process can contribute more easily than in a synchronous group discussion. The disadvantage is that learners tend to be passive. Therefore, it is important for you as a teacher to provide clear guidance on how to use the forum and to introduce an attractive topic that encourages learners to contribute and respond to each



other. You can also act as a role model to get the forum going and actively encourage learners to participate in the forum. This will help you avoid the passivity often seen in online forums and chats. A good way is to start with easy to do posts, such as personal experiences, for example "What was your first encounter with XY?" or "What do you find most important about XY?". Also, give a clear instruction, such as "Write at least one contribution and respond to at least four contributions from the other learners!".

If the adult education organization you are working for already provides you with a forum, chat or the like, you preferably should use it. Otherwise, there are several ways to establish a forum like experience. Maybe you already use a learning management system such as for example Moodle or Google classroom. These systems have integrated forums. Social Media and messengers such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, or Signal have integrated forum capabilities or may be abused to act as a forum. The advantage of these is that your learners are often familiar with them. The downside are privacy issues you may encounter. There are also dedicated forums platforms available online, for example forumotion, tapatalk, or mywebforum.

A handy tip to get started: You may integrate a video to stimulate discussion! So, Flipgrid or even YouTube may also be an option.

