

Good Practice Examples and Blended Learning Concepts in Teachers' CPD in Germany



Blended
Learning in
Teachers'
Professional
Development
- Developing a
Blended
Learning
Course in
Content Area
Literacy for
Secondary
Teachers
(BleTeach)

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I. Introduction

Our research aimed *a)* to identify the perceptions of continuous professional development (CPD) providers about *what counts as good practice in blended learning* and *b)* to *make recommendations concerning the essential features of effective blended learning* in CPD that will be transferred to the results of the Blended Learning in Teachers' Professional Development (BleTeach) project.

The leading question of our research is, therefore, "What is CPD training providers' perception about good practice in blended learning?" and, more specifically,

- What are some highly effective combinations of face-to-face and e-learning components within a CPD for learners' (i.e. teachers') motivation, interaction and learning outcomes?
- What are the instructional design patterns (learning/teaching scenarios) are used in blended learning courses?
- What are the major success factors in implementing blended learning within CPD?
- What are the major obstacles/ threats and ways of overcoming them in implementing blended learning within CPD?
- In courses that are considered good practice (in terms of blended learning CPD) what kind of evaluation was used?

II. Methodology related information (description of how data was collected)

German teachers' CPD is managed by the federal states. Depending on for example size of state, budget, trainer availability, each state decides if blended learning is a useful tool/method or not. To get information about using and producing blended learning courses in German teachers' CPD we contacted the heads of 12 federal teacher training institutions and blended learning experts that are members of a mailing list dedicated to blended learning issues for interview requests.

The German BleTeach team conducted 9 interviews with blended learning experts from 8 federal states of Germany (marked with red line).



List of interview partners:

Expert/ Institution	Date of Interview, Interview by
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Dr. Ehlert Brüser-Sommer Bundesverwaltungsamt - Zentralstelle für das Auslandsschulwesen - Fachbereich ZfA 4 Bundesverwaltungsamt, 50728 Köln Telefon: 0221 758 8727 bzw. 07361 490 3095 E-Mail: Ehlert.Brueser-Sommer@bva.bund.de	11.03.2016 Andrea Bürgin
Michael Gros Landesinstitut für Pädagogik und Medien (LPM) Beethovenstraße 26 66125 Saarbrücken Telefon: 06897 7908 208 E-Mail: mgros@lpm.uni-sb.de	02.05.2016 Dr. Andreas Seidler
Marcus Lauer Pädagogisches Landesinstitut Rheinland-Pfalz Butenschönstr. 2 67346 Speyer Telefon: 06232 659 166 E-Mail: Marcus.Lauer@pl.rlp.de	15.03.2016 Andrea Bürgin
Heiko Nealon Niedersächsisches Landesinstitut für schulische Qualitätsentwicklung Richthofenstraße 29 31137 Hildesheim Telefon: 05121 1695 416 E-Mail: heiko.nealon@nlq.niedersachsen.de	13.04.2016 Andrea Bürgin
Katrin Nowaczyk Thüringer Institut für Lehrerfortbildung, Lehrplanentwicklung und Medien Heinrich-Heine-Allee 2-4 99438 Bad Berka Telefon: 036458 56 258 E-Mail: katrin.nowaczyk@thillm.de	05.04.2016 Andrea Bürgin

Henry Patz Landesinstitut für Schulqualität und Lehrerbildung Liebknechtstraße 65 39110 Telefon: 0391 81 900 517 E-Mail: kalsa@webschule.bildung-lsa.de	22.03.2016, Dr. Andreas Seidler
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Michael Walory Landesinstitut für Schule Nordrhein-Westfalen (QUA-LiS NRW) Paradieser Weg 64 59494 Soest Telefon: 02921 683 5040 E-Mail: michael.walory@qua-lis.nrw.de	18.04.2016 Dr. Malte Stein

We developed a guideline (see Annex V.1.) to get answers related to:

- Advantages of Blended Learning in CPD,
- Factors of success,
- Obstacles in Implementation,
- Evaluation.

The duration of every individual telephone interview was within approximately 45 minutes. The interviews were recorded to evaluate them for our purpose.

III. Findings

III.1. Advantages of Blended Learning in CPD

To get information about the advantages of Blended Learning in teachers' CPD in the interviews, we put the spotlight on two mostly used forms of teacher training: face-to-face courses and e-learning courses.

The following paragraph gives a summary of the possible advantages mentioned by the interview partners.

III.1.1. Advantages over face-to-face courses

■ Increased flexibility of time for the participants

There are different types of provided time-flexibility mentioned by the interview partners: blended learning courses offer a good alternative to after-work or weekend courses. Participants get the opportunity to engage themselves in course issues over a longer period of time. Blended learning enables the students to follow their own working pace and can reduce travel-time. Blended learning courses reduce time limitation. The learners do not have to wait for a scheduled lesson – the training platform is open 24/7.

■ Activating all course participants during online-phase

Whereas face-to-face courses mostly have relatively few really active participants, students are activated in an online-phase of a blended learning course.

■ Saving face-to-face time for discussion, exchange of experience und reflection

If subject matter is outsourced to online-phases, rare face to face time can be used for interaction between the course participants or participants and their teachers. Discussions about the content,

exchange of experience with course material or practical testing as well as reflection about the course and students own development during the course were considered attractive and useful in face-to-face sessions.

- Opportunity for practical testing in the own classroom already during the online-phase

Blended learning courses can offer a direct and supported connection between course subject and practice. That means the new material from face-to-face meeting or developed in online-phase can be practically applied in the own classroom, discussed on the platform, evaluated or modified by the students directly during the course. The testing experience can be reused in the course as well.

- Promotion of media literacy

Guided work with new media increases media skills. During their course lessons participants learn about different kinds of new media and how to use it in their own classroom.

- Reduction of travel costs

Blended learning courses offer more local flexibility. Instead of weekly individual meetings participants meet online. They can work from home or school and there are less seminar rooms to rent. That should reduce travel expenses.

- Increased coverage of course content

With reduced face-to-face meetings blended learning courses can reach more teachers in distant parts of the country (Auslandsschulwesen: all over the world) particularly in the major territorial states of Germany like North Rhine-Westphalia, Lower Saxony, Rhineland-Palatinate, Baden-Württemberg or Bavaria.

III.1.2. Advantages over e-learning

- Higher degree of motivation and social commitment through face-to-face contact

→ Higher sense of loyalty of the participants

Face-to-face exchanges of experience with other participants or live-discussions about the course were considered attractive and useful. Social interaction can increase the motivation to finish the course.

- Higher potential to tutor participants with low media literacy skills

E-learning assumes high intrinsic motivation and advanced technical knowledge from the participant of the course. In blended learning courses those participants who are more inexperienced in ICT-skills can get more and better support by tutors. The learners can also benefit from each other, in particular if the tutor is not available. They don't have to be lone fighters like it is in e-learning.

III.2. Factors of success

To get expertise of our interview partners in successful blended learning, we asked about organization requirements, chronological arrangement, content matters, and about requirements for tutors and participants.

III.2.1. Organizational requirements

The asked experts in blended learning teachers' training pointed out functional technics and the usability of e.g. the learning platform and its applications, internet connection, passwords on hand etc. A definition of assumed previous knowledge has to be communicated to potential participants before the beginning of the course. There has to be a precise time schedule right at the beginning of a course. Continuous contact between trainees and tutors has to be ensured. A group of learners that is supervised by one tutor should not contain more than 20 persons.

- Functional technics,
- Usability of the learning platform and applications,
- Definition of assumed previous knowledge,
- Precise time schedule,
- Continuous contact to the tutor,
- Max. 20 participants in one group.

III.2.2. Chronological arrangement

A special aspect of organization concerns the chronological arrangement of a course. Our experts held that distant learning phases should not be longer than 4 to 6 weeks. Emphasised was the importance of immediate feedback to working results during distant learning.

- Distant learning phases no longer than 4 to 6 weeks
- Prompt feedback to working results during distant learning

In the point of chronological arrangement we got also some **inconsistent statements** from our different experts. Some of them favour the beginning of a course with face-to-face learning; others favour the beginning with distant learning. The minimum percentage of face-to-face learning in a course was quoted from 10% up to 50%. Inconsistent where also the statements about the assignment of knowledge transfer and practice to the different phases. Some hold that distant learning should be used for transfer of knowledge and face-to-face time should be used for practice. Some think vice versa.

III.2.3. Content

An import factor of success under the aspect of content is that the assignments of tasks are in step with actual practice of teachers. The experts also emphasise that the assignments of tasks must be comprehensible and that they have to cater to the level of previous knowledge of the participants. The use of media to present the content of a course should be appealing.

- Assignment of tasks in step with actual practice,
- Appealing use of media,
- Comprehensible assignment of tasks,
- Assignments of tasks catering to the level of previous knowledge.

III.2.4. Requirements for tutors

The following requirements are for tutors to assure a successful course are mentioned by our experts:

- Technical skills,
- Content-area expertise,
- Familiarity with working conditions in schools,
- Continuous addressability,
- Competence to give positive feedback during distance learning phases.

III.2.5. Requirements for participants

On the part of the trainees there have to be particular interest in the issue and openness towards new media as pre-conditions of a successful course. In the case of CPD sufficient release from teaching duties in school is needed for the participants. The participants have to be equipped with working devices to take successfully part in a blended Learning course.

- Particular interest in issue,
- Openness towards new media,
- Sufficient release from teaching duties for participants,
- Equipment with working devices.

III.3. Obstacles in implementation

In the interviews our partners pointed out five main obstacles:

- High intensity of time in developing adequate course materials

To develop a blended learning course as an effective tool in teachers' CPD all materials like worksheets, videos, tutorials... must be of high quality and provide all learning styles and types. It's a long process for the training team to fit all materials to the course and make the platform ready to start. It is important to identify the need for in-service training and interesting course themes to improve the relation between invested resources and performance.

- Insufficient release from teaching duties in distance phases – both for teachers as well as tutors

Teachers' CPD is regulated by the federal states. Normally a teacher has approximate three full days to do in-service training. Blended learning courses have these days for face-to-face meetings alone. Often the teacher trainers are teachers as well. There is a lot of additional work on top of normally teacher-business during the online-phase and mostly no release from teaching duties. It requires a high level of flexibility and motivation of both: participants and teacher trainers.

- Insufficient technical equipment of the course participants

Participants and tutors have to meet the challenges with different levels of equipment. No computer system works exactly like the other; sometimes internet connection could be low or fail. Technical support has to be offered 24/7.

- Insufficient usability of many e-learning platforms

Some platforms, like Moodle are not ready to use. It is a challenge to tutors to create a easy to handle course and to guide the students adequately.

- Negative bias towards blended learning by many teachers

It needs a lot of well-done blended learning courses to remove the remembrance of a bad one. Teachers usually prefer face-to-face courses. They can go oversight, learn something new, come home, use the new material or not and that's it. In blended learning curses they have to engage in a subject matter over an unusually long and significant period of time.

III.4. Evaluation

III.4.1. Methods

Based on the experiences of our interview partners evaluation of blended learning teachers' CPD courses in most cases was done with online or paper-based questionnaires. Some institutions use standardized questionnaires (QUES) especially for the face-to-face meetings. Occasionally the trainer team asked for individual feedback by e-mail or in online forums like requesting information about the average working time spent per activity.

III.4.2. Suggestions based on reported evaluation results

Based on the reported results of evaluation our interview partners made some suggestions:

- Grouping participants according to their level of previous knowledge can reduce the work required in some areas of tutoring as differentiation.
- To work with an enhanced time management can make it easier to coordinate their work sessions for the participants.
- Learners' benefit from interaction with the tutor (without over-protecting the learner). Technical help should be non-stop available. Constantly given feedback on participants' current state of work is helpful and required.
- It is easier to work with comprehensible tasks; this is why blended learning courses need an enhanced clarity of the statements of work assignments.

IV. Recommendations: Seven commandments of Blended Learning

Based on the interviews with the experts we listed seven basic rules for teacher trainers to create a successful blended learning course:

- Make sure that the technical equipment is ready to go and easy to handle for the participants.
- Make sure that everyone gets what s/he needs, either by grouping the participants according to their level of previous knowledge or by tailoring tasks specifically to the needs of the participants.
- Make sure to teach things that matter in a teacher's daily life.
- Make sure that everyone knows what to do and until when.
- Make sure that everyone has enough time to do so.
- Make sure to keep in touch with the participants, particularly during distance learning times.
- Make sure to keep the motivation up: Do not forget the impact of the fun factor.

V. Annexes

V.1. Interview Guideline

Persönlicher Erfahrungshintergrund in Bezug auf BleLearning-Kurse	Auf welche Weise sind Sie mit dem Thema BleLearning vertraut geworden? In welcher Weise sind oder waren Sie mit der Gestaltung und Durchführung von BleLearning-Kursen befasst?
Erinnerungen an einen besonders gut verlaufenen Kurs	Vermutlich gibt es BleLearning-Kurse, die Sie persönlich in besonders guter Erinnerung haben. Bitte erzählen Sie uns von einem solchen Kurs.
Merkmale gelungener BleLearning-Kurse in der Lehrerfortbildung	Was hat die besondere Qualität dieses Kurses ausgemacht?
Bedingungen (= Erfolgsfaktoren) für das Gelingen von BleLearning-Kursen in der Lehrerfortbildung	Was sind Ihres Erachtens die wichtigsten Erfolgsfaktoren für Blended Learning in der Lehrerfortbildung? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Welche organisatorischen Rahmenbedingungen müssen gegeben sein? o Welche Voraussetzungen auf Seiten der Teilnehmenden müssen gegeben sein? o Welche Voraussetzungen auf Seiten der Lehrenden müssen gegeben sein? o Welche quantitative Aufteilung zwischen E-Learning und Präsenzphasen hat sich als besonders effektiv erwiesen? (Im Hinblick auf Motivation und Lernerfolg der Teilnehmenden) o Welche Verteilung von Wissensvermittlung, Übung, Diskussion und Erfolgskontrolle auf die E-Learning bzw. Präsenzphasen hat sich als sinnvoll erwiesen? o Sonstige Erfolgsfaktoren?
Spezifische Vorteile des BleLearning-Formats gegenüber reinen Präsenz- bzw. E-Learning-kursen	Welche besonderen Chancen eröffnen sich mit der Einführung von Blended Learning-Formaten (in der Lehrerfortbildung)?
Formen der Evaluation	Unter welchen Aspekten und mit welchen Methoden (z.B. Teilnehmerfragebogen) wurden die Kurse evaluiert?
Wichtige Evaluationsergebnisse	Was waren die wichtigsten Ergebnisse der Evaluation (im Hinblick auf die Optimierung von Blended Learning Formaten)?
Erinnerungen an einen Kurs mit unbefriedigendem Verlauf	Möglicherweise haben Sie auch schon einmal einen BleLearning-Kurs erlebt, mit dessen Verlauf Sie nicht so zufrieden gewesen sind. Können Sie uns von einem solchen Kurse berichten?
Merkmale/Anzeichen für das Nicht-Gelingen eines BleLearning-Kurses	Was ist es demnach, das an solchen Kursen „schief“ laufen kann?
Ursachen für das Nicht-Gelingen	Wo sind Ihres Erachtens die Ursachen zu suchen, wenn Kurse nicht „rund“ laufen?
Spezifische Risiken des BleLearning-Formats	Könnte man somit sagen, dass BleLearning-Formate nicht etwa nur besondere Vorteile haben, sondern auch mit besonderen Risiken verbunden sind?
Herausforderungen bei der Implementierung von BleLearning-Kursen	Was sind die größten Herausforderungen bei der Einführung von Blended Learning (in der Lehrerfortbildung)?
Sonstiges	Gibt es weitere Punkte, die Ihnen im Zusammenhang mit dem Thema BleLearning als wichtig oder zumindest erwähnenswert erscheinen?

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Köln, den 1.3.2016

Bitte um ein Experten-Interview zu erfolgreichen Blended-Learning-Formaten in der Lehrerfortbildung (für das EU-Projekt *BleTeach*)

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,

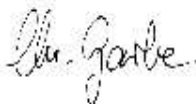
im Rahmen des von mir geleiteten EU-Forschungs- / und Entwicklungsprojektes „*BleTeach – Blended Learning in der Lehrerfortbildung*“ (genauere Infos in der Anlage) möchten wir in sechs europäischen Ländern das dort vorhandene Erfahrungswissen zu Blended Learning-Formaten in der Lehrerfortbildung ermitteln und analysieren. Auf diese Weise sollen Gelingens-Bedingungen für Blended Learning Angebote in der Lehrerfortbildung identifiziert und Möglichkeiten zur systematischen Verankerung von Blended Learning in der Lehrerfortbildung untersucht werden. Ziel ist es, einen Blended Learning-Fortbildungskurs zu entwickeln, mit dem sich Lehrerinnen und Lehrer der Sekundarstufen zur Gestaltung eines sprachsensiblen Fachunterrichts qualifizieren können und diesen Kurs an 40 Lehrerfortbildungseinrichtungen der beteiligten Staaten zu verankern.

Wir würden uns freuen, wenn Sie als Expertinnen und Experten in Sachen Blended Learning zu einem **telefonischen Interview** bereit wären, in dem Sie auf Grundlage Ihrer Erfahrung berichten, welche besonderen Herausforderungen, Erfolgsfaktoren und Chancen bei der Planung und Durchführung von Lehrerfortbildungen im Blended Learning Format Sie sehen.

Das aus offenen Fragen bestehende Interview würde zu einem mit Ihnen zu vereinbarenden **Termin zwischen dem 09. und 24. März 2016** von Andrea Bürgin (Pädagogisches Landesinstitut Rheinland-Pfalz), Dr. Andreas Seidler (Uni Köln) oder Dr. Malte Stein (Uni Köln) durchgeführt und hätte eine Dauer von ca. 20 Minuten. Sofern Sie damit einverstanden sind, wird das Gespräch aufgezeichnet, weil dies die Auswertung erheblich erleichtert. Die Ergebnisse fließen in einen Bericht ein, in dem alle befragten Experten genannt, nicht aber unter Angabe des Namens zitiert werden. Diese Publikation würden wir Ihnen selbstverständlich zukommen lassen.

Bitte teilen Sie uns mit einer kurzen E-Mail an andrea.buergin@pl.rlp.de oder andreas.seidler@uni-koeln.de mit, ob Sie zu einem Gespräch bereit sind. In diesem Falle werden wir Ihnen konkrete Terminvorschläge machen und unsere Fragen vorab zukommen lassen. Wir würden uns freuen, bis 08. März eine Nachricht von Ihnen zu erhalten.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen und herzlichem Dank für Ihre Unterstützung

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Christine Garbe'.

Prof'in Dr. Christine Garbe