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## **1. Success Factors for Quality of Online and Blended Learning in Adult Education – preliminary results of a qualitative study**

The context of learning experienced a radical change in Higher Education (HE). Worldwide different types of Online and Blended Learning (OBL) emerged e.g. hybrid learning, technology enhanced learning, e-learning, blended learning. Within the context of HE different frameworks, with similar quality dimensions, for Quality Assurance and Improvement (QA&I) of OBL emerged worldwide. It is argued in literature that quality of OBL should be mainstreamed into traditional quality assurance frameworks. However it seems that frameworks within HE are often conceptualized from the providers' perspective (e.g. institutions, government) lacking the learners' perspective. Also these frameworks were not specifically designed to support the quality dialog between stakeholders which is needed according to several scholars to align management, faculty and students goals. Nor were these frames designed to mainstream quality of OBL into traditional quality assurance frameworks used by educational institutions.

Online and Blended Learning is emerging in adult education (AE), Flanders (Belgium). Compared to institutions in HE, AE Institutions operate in a different context and cater to a wider range of audiences in terms of age range and educational level e.g. second chance to learn, secondary education, vocational training. As the demand increases, providers need general, scientifically-grounded guidelines to monitor important quality aspects. However for this context a common quality framework for OBL is lacking. Therefore providers are compelled to turn to practices in HE.

This study is designed to identify success factors linked to quality dimensions and indicators for quality in OBL designed for adult learners. It is a step towards the construction of a framework that providers can use to contextualize their approach to QA&I. The work of Ossiannilsson and Landgren (2012) is opted as a main theoretical framework. It contains success factors for quality in OBL to meet students' needs: accessibility, flexibility, interactivity, personalization, transparency, productivity and participation. These are linked to quality dimensions and areas: management, design (course design, curriculum design and assessment), delivery and support (learner support and teacher and staff support).

To explore current approaches and experiences with QA&I of OBL qualitative data were drawn from focus group interviews (n=12 groups) with respondents from 5 centers of AE. In each center one interview was conducted with respondents (n=17) at institutional level; and at least one at program level (n=20). Concurrently literature was searched for frameworks for quality in OBL developed for adult education, or from an adult learners perspective. Findings from both were discussed and agreed upon by the coders to construct a framework.

Preliminary findings of qualitative analysis suggest that similar success factors for OBL are present in AE, with the addition of the success factor credibility. Success

factors could be linked to several quality aspects: management, design (Curriculum-Program-Learning activities and assessment), (technological) delivery and support (learner support and teacher and staff support). The findings are discussed and prospects for future research are presented.

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