

Measuring student persistence in blended learning programs: a tentative exploration

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Abstract

In blended learning programs, participants take both online and face-to-face courses. As the flexibility of blended learning especially appeals to mature learners with family and/or work obligations, the format corresponds to the European commitment to increase adults' participation in lifelong learning. Whereas participation in education is an important policy objective, it is mainly students' persistence (i.e. the progress towards degree completion) that constitutes an indicator of learning program effectiveness. Although strong in popularity, blended learning programs suffer from a lack of student persistence. Since persistence monitoring is a catalyst for ongoing program review and improvement, this paper tentatively explores the availability of current persistence measures that allow blended program managers to follow up on adult learners' persistence during training. Initial findings indicate that a majority of studies is conceived as one-shot assessments, failing to track students' progress through longitudinal designs and multiple observations. Research that does take into account learners' progress, does not simultaneously address blended settings and program level factors. As blended program managers are provided with little theoretical and empirical support to capture adult learners' persistence, the road is open to future reflections on frameworks that integrate both students' progress and program level factors.

Bijdrage aan het symposium "Blended leren bij volwassenen: voor iedereen en alles?" tijdens de Onderwijs Research Dagen (ORD) 'Verleidend onderwijsonderzoek: de sleutel naar succes'. Leiden, 17-19 Juni 2015.

De presentatie kan worden geraadpleegd via de ALO-website: [Symposium Blended learning @Conference Onderwijs Research Dagen Leiden – 18.06.2015](#)