

## USING A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST FRAMEWORK TO DEVELOP BLENDED AND ONLINE LEARNING: A FOUR-STEP-MODEL

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Our paper presents a simple four-step-model for the process of developing blended and online learning, including the development of learning materials and structuring the instruction. The model is based on our experiences with transforming traditional lecture-based lessons into problem-based blended and online learning using a social constructivist approach and a standard virtual learning environment (VLE).

According to a social constructivist approach, learning is considered an active, social process in which individuals actively construct knowledge. This means that learning necessitates the active, self-governed, and problem based work of students. Based on a social constructivist approach, we outline a four-step-model to develop blended learning.



Figure 1: A four-step-model for developing blended and online learning.

The first step in developing blended and online learning is to formulate a problem that covers and “activates” the curriculum. In practice the problem may consist of a (mandatory) assignment which includes open-ended questions that, in a clever way, motivates the students to explore the curriculum. A way to identify the problem(s) is to look for central issues in the curriculum/course literature, the course goals/requirements etc.

The second step is to invent, develop, and implement the materials. There are numerous ways to do this, but in most cases we recommend to use existing teaching materials such as PowerPoint presentations and links to online texts as the basis for the new materials. Furthermore, you may have access to a VLE which oftentimes provides useful tools such as discussion forums, document sharing/file upload, quizzes, SCORM/learning paths, and various tools for communication.

The third step is to (re)structure the instruction. The constructivist approach emphasizes the importance of self-governed learning, so instead of one-way communication of content to the students, the process of solving the problem is considered most important. In order to facilitate this, the teacher must provide a “learning room” where the students can collaborate, get guidance and support, access materials, and submit assignments. These features are usually available in standard VLEs, so it is basically a question about “setting the scene”.

Finally, the roles of the teacher and students should be assigned with regards to the learning situation. The teacher is no longer a one-way lecturer, but instead a facilitator, moderator, and guide. His/her role is to nurture the learning process and to provide guidance and answers to student questions.